TARA CHAND

HISTORY OF THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN INDIA



History of the Freedom Movement in India has been written by Dr. Tara Chand, a famous historian of India. He undertook this study on the advice of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Education Minister of the Government of India. It comprises of four volumes and represents the official Indian viewpoint regarding the Freedom Movement.

The First Volume deals with the background material which is a must in order to understand the dynamics of the Freedom Movement in India. It also provides us with a comprehensive picture of the political, social, cultural, economic and administrative institutions of the era when the Britishers were trying to grab and consolidate power over India (between 1750 and 1856).

The Second Volume narrates the inspiring story of India's long struggle of liberation from the British rule during the period 1800-1905. This period was India's confrontation with Western power and culture, which produced a strong ferment in this country's political, social and cultural ideas. Indian nationalism in its modern form was born in the last decades of the 19th century. It was also during this time that the great movements of social and religious reform swept through the entire country. The revolt of 1857, the establishment of direct rule by the British Crown, the rising power of the Indian Middle Classes and their efforts to forge political, economic and cultural unity along-with a strong desire for self-government, have also been dealt with in this volume.

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VOLUME FOUR

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BY

TARA CHAND

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PREFACE

The freedom movement in India is a unique phenomenon. There is hardly any other country, so vast in area, inhabited by such a variety of races, following such different religions, speaking so many languages, professing such diversity of customs, which has developed in the course of a hundred years the consciousness of national unity, constituting the basis of freedom.

Not till the middle of the nineteenth century did the concept of political unity arise among the Indians. However, it has to be remembered that unifying forces had been at work throughout the long history previous to the appearance of the British in India. In the ancient times the cultural outlook of the higher classes was identical, which affected also the attitude of the masses and brought about similarity in their way of thinking and feeling.

The Muslim conquest introduced a heterogeneous element in Indian life—an unassimilable religion and a foreign language. The Muslim conquerors were, however, not religious fanatics and they soon adapted themselves to Indian conditions. Their policy of using Persian language as the medium for state purposes was modified, for they patronised Indian languages and evolved Urdu as the language of literary expression and common use.

Thus, India had two cultural traditions based on two different religions. One was cultivated by the Hindus who were in a majority and the other by the Muslims. But the two cultures were influencing each other and coming together.

The geographical environment of the two cultures and the physical conditions in which they flourished were identical for both. The isolation of the country from the other

lands promoted a similarity of outlook. The Muslims learnt to use Indian languages and to practise modes of life which were common.

Till the middle of the 19th century the vast multitude of the Indian people was steeped in medievalism. Politics of the modern conception were only known to a microscopic minority of the western-educated class. Hence the revolutionary movements of the first half of the 19th century were feudal in character. They contemplated no change in the system of government or social order.

After 1858 politicisation of the Indian mind began in a milieu which was dominated by religious slogans and guided by sectarian beliefs and customs.

The policy of the British rulers was to accentuate the biases of their subjects so as to widen their differences. In fact, they acted on the principle that consolidation of the Indian people into a single nation was against the imperial interest, and therefore, it was their policy to encourage the growth of diverse group consciousnesses which could be played against one another. The disparities between various groups were emphasized and their complaints, just and unjust, used to create suspicion and distrust among the communities.

In the Revolt of 1857-58 the Muslims were regarded as the enemies of the British Raj. But within a short time they were absolved of the accusation and then the Hindus began to be suspect.

After 1858 Muslims of the upper classes realised that their anti-British stance was a mistake and that the only proper course was to adopt western ways and remain loyal to the British connection. The lower classes of Muslims under the guidance of their Ulama, however, continued their hostility towards the rulers; but the lower classes did not command

the influence which the upper class did. So the upper class continued to gain the favours of the Government.

So far as the Hindus were concerned, their growing sense of solidarity was considered dangerous to British supremacy. Differences between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, upper castes and Depressed Classes, were exploited, as also the rivalry between Hindus and Muslims.

In the circumstances the struggle for self-government was an endeavour to bridge the gulf which divided the communities and castes, for it was realised that only a united India could claim the right of self-determination. The history of India since the middle of the nineteenth century is the story of the attempts at political unification of communities, Hindu and Muslim, and of castes, higher and lower. The favourable factors were the development of a dynamic economic system which modified the old static class groupism and gave rise to rationalisation of social conditions. A part of the economy of India was brought into the circle of modern conditions, which necessitated the growth of nationalism, economic and political.

Other factors were the establishment of a modern system of government and of education.

The unfavourable factors were the persistence of medieval notions of religion, social order and customs. They were encouraged by the selfish interests of the British Government. The conflict between the favourable and unfavourable factors continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The unfavourable factors are deep-rooted and ancient; the favourable factors are modern and of recent origin. The spirit of nationalism is of recent growth. Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian to apply it to social and political institutions. In politics it made its appearance on the national scale

in 1885. But with the turn of the century it made rapid strides and from 1919 it flooded the land.

The movement of resurgence began in earnest after the Partition of Bengal in 1905. Its first fruit was the Morley-Minto Scheme of reforms of 1909. The reforms were a clever device to defeat the movement. They were based on the recognition of the separate identity of the Muslim community and laid the foundations of communal division in Indian political affairs. Ten years later, *i.e.*, in 1919, the principle of separation was repeated in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. The two Acts confirmed the vicious theory of two nations which was the basis of British convictions. This was further elaborated in MacDonald's Award after the Second Round Table Conference. A number of new claimants for special treatment were added to the two groups, such as the Depressed Classes, Sikhs and the Indian feudatory states.

The question of self-determination was left to the hazards of reconciliation of the antagonistic parties. However, the Second World War intervened. It marked the definite decline of the British Empire. Two dominant states, the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., rose as super powers and Great Britain lost its supremacy. It was obliged to withdraw from its imperial commitment and devote its energies to build up its shattered internal economy.

But before abandoning India it took the final step of recognising the separatist claim of the Muslim League and of partitioning the country into two states, India and Pakistan. Having suffered defeat in its efforts to maintain the integrity of the British Empire, Britain successfully imposed its theory of the diversity of the Indian people.

History of the Freedom Movement in India records the

conflict of British conception of Indian lack of unity and India's claim of unity, and the right of self-determination.

In the writing of this history I have received valuable help from my colleague, Dr. V. G. Dighe, who was associated with me throughout the period of compiling the history. Dr. Dighe did much research for the project with tireless energy. He worked hard poring over hundreds of files of the National Archives, Government and other publications, old newspapers and journals, Parliamentary Debates, etc., collecting useful material for the history. In the later stages again he finalised the press copy, read the proofs and prepared the index. Dr. R. K. Parmu was equally helpful, but he had to leave at the stage when the third volume was being composed. I am thankful to Shri V. C. Joshi of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library for lending me books. It is owing to the courtesy of Dr. Shri Nandan Prasad that I was able to utilize the extensive material in the National Archives of India. To Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad I owe special thanks for his cooperation in reading the volume, making suggestions and scrutinising the final proofs.

B. R. Ajmani, my Personal Assistant and Stenotypist, besides typing the whole book, rendered ungrudging service in various ways.

To all of my helpers and assistants I am grateful.

August 15, 1972 TARA CHAND

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CHAPTER ONE

INTERLUDE OF GROWING DIFFERENCES

I. Gandhiji's Objective in the Freedom Struggle

When Gandhiji after a serious surgical operation came out of prison to recuperate at Juhu beach, Bombay, in March 1924, he found the problems of the country far more perplexing than what they were at the time of his arrest. However, after much reflection he came to the conclusion that the old programme of civil disobedience required little change as there was no alternative method of reaching the goal. Therefore when in April C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru came to persuade him to give up the boycott of legislatures he did not agree, for he was not convinced by their arguments. Nevertheless, he did not want to put any obstacles in their way or to countenance any propaganda against them. In fact, later in the year when the Government of Bengal started a campaign against C. R. Das and the Swarajists and promulgated an ordinance on October 25, 1924, sanctioning house searches and arrests on a large scale, Gandhiji rushed to Calcutta, and, in support of the Swarajists, issued a statement which was signed by Gandhiji, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru on November 6, 1924. The statement recommended that the Swaraj Party should carry on work in connection with the central and provincial legislatures on behalf of and as an integral part of the Congress. Subsequently the All-India Congress Committee and then the Congress at Belgaum accepted the recommendation and put the seal of approval on the statement.

By this high-minded gesture Gandhiji ended the bickerings between the two groups of Congressmen and they were left free to pursue their own programmes helping each other in promoting common national interests.

Gandhiji's conclusions regarding the causes of the failure of the last movement were : (1) that there was no defect in the means employed to achieve independence, namely, non-violent non-cooperation; (2) the failure was due to either personal shortcomings of the volunteers and their leaders, or defects in the organisation. So far as the first was concerned there were qualitative and quantitative inadequacies. The number of volunteers was insufficient for the task, and their training had been indifferent—for instance, many had failed to pay their annual fee, did not habitually wear Khaddar and observe the vows against untouchability and violence.

Then there were gaps in the organisation of the non-cooperating

forces. Many villages were left without any Congress Committees, the liaison between the primary committees and committees on the higher levels was lax, with the result that instructions did not pass down systematically and were not observed and executed properly.

Gandhiji's approach to the grim and grave struggle for freedom of India by non-violent non-cooperation, as stated before, was not purely political. As he explained to Reading, it was a religious movement "designed to purge Indian political life of corruption, deceit, terrorism and the incubus of white supremacy".[1] It was not even an endeavour to replace the British rulers by Indians maintaining the same system of government. "I am not interested," he said, "in freeing India from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever."

He had a very radical object in view. For him every state was coercive in nature and the organ of a privileged class, and therefore evil. He desired to end all exploitation of class by class, the tyranny of a majority over the minority. His ideal was Sarvodaya, welfare of all, which connoted a cooperative federation of village republics. Such a society was a unity in diversity. Its binding force was mutual respect and cooperation and not passion and force. In such a society inequality would be replaced by equality, conflict by harmony and coercion by reason.

In his introduction to the autobiography he wrote on November 26, 1925, "My experiments in the political field are now known.... For me they have not much value.... What I want to achieve is self-realization, to see God face to face."[2] But Gandhiji's conviction was that national independence was the *sine qua non* for spiritual freedom or self-realisation. If, however, this independence was won by violence, it would be worse than slavery and he would have no interest in it.

He must not be misunderstood. It is clear that he was neither wholly eastern nor wholly western in his views. His ideal so far as the individual was concerned was eastern—salvation; but so far as the community or social order was concerned he was in the company of such Western thinkers as Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Tolstoy.

In the light of these principles it is not difficult to understand his concern for independence, his involvement in it and exertions in this behalf. Now a struggle, apart from the psychological attitudes towards the opponents, involves the same questions of morale, discipline and organisation whether it is with arms or without arms. Gandhiji had noticed the failings in these matters among the non-cooperators of

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[1] Ashe, Geoffrey, *Gandhi: A Study in Revolution* (Asia Publishing House, 1968), p. 217.

[2] Gandhi, M. K., *Autobiography* (Second edition, reprinted 1948), p. 4.

1920-22. He was determined that before he undertook another movement these should be removed.

To him it was evident that the fight for freedom was not between the Government and its armed forces on the one side and the educated middle class Indians on the other. In fact he disliked "the hardness of heart of the educated". He thought they were too much enamoured of parliamentarianism and offices to put their heart into the struggle which demanded extreme and prolonged sacrifice. His approach to the problems of India was, thus, fundamentally different from that of the educated class.

Naturally, his preference was for the masses whom he wanted to train as soldiers for the impending war against the imperial system. But for the rank and file of the troops a graded cadre of officers was necessary. This he could recruit from among the nationalist Congressmen. Gandhiji, therefore, in spite of his scepticism about the educated, tried to maintain his hold upon the middle class Indian National Congress. The Congress also realized that without the support of Gandhiji and his cohorts from the villages, the British Government could not be made to yield to the people's will.

The situation which confronted Gandhiji in 1924 appeared desperate. The retreat of 1922 and his forced absence from the field of action had brought affairs into a dangerous posture. The Congressmen had lost the will to continue the struggle, although they still talked of non-cooperation and boycott. Many Congress leaders, in order to avoid a lapse into futility and passivity, considered the less exacting alternative of council entry as a means of keeping up the spirit of resistance.

The boycott programme had ceased to attract the title-holders who were now even less prepared to surrender their titles than they were in the heyday of non-cooperation. Lawyers had reverted to their practice in the law courts. Students were flocking back to the institutions maintained or aided by Government. For Swadeshi and boycott of foreign cloth only half-hearted support was all that was left of the grand design of the five-pronged boycott campaign.

The Congress, then, was divided into two factions. One group led by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, which came to be called the pro-changers, considered the circumstances unfavourable for civil disobedience and was attracted by the opportunities for political propaganda which the reformed councils offered. They came to the conclusion that the Congress should be induced to remove its ban on council entry.

The other group, known as no-changers, argued that civil disobedience was the sole means of paralysing Government and winning Swaraj. It was waste of energy, according to them, to undertake the

council programme. Besides, it involved the abandonment of the plan decided at Nagpur in 1920.

The pro-changers had, before the release of Gandhiji, already made up their mind. They were, however, unable to convince the Congress at Gaya in December 1922 to give them permission for council entry. Undaunted by the rebuff, they launched on January 1, 1923, the Swaraj Party to fight the elections. The no-changers were alarmed at the prospect of a split in the Congress, and a special session of the Congress was held at Delhi in September 1923, where the Swarajists were permitted to follow their programme. At the regular session held in December at Cocanada the Delhi resolution was confirmed.

II. The Disintegration of the Khilafat Movement

The other problem which was still worse was the crack in the patiently and assiduously built structure of communal unity. By March 1924, the Khilafat Movement had been deprived of its *raison d'etre* surprisingly by the action of the National Assembly of Turkey itself. For some time, that is between 1922 and 1924, the Khilafatists of India enthused by the successes of Mustafa Kamal applauded his decision to separate the office of the Caliph from that of the Sultan by depriving it of temporal power, but when the office of Khilafat was abolished they were disappointed and perplexed. Some of them in this predicament identified themselves with the Congress, but others became divided into different groups. "One revived the old tradition to cling to the British Raj with redoubled satisfaction", others adopted attitudes of varying degrees of criticism towards the Congress. The resentment of some led them into courses wholly opposed to the goal of national unity. Then fresh interest was awakened in the Muslim League which had been moribund since 1918. A meeting of the League was held at Lahore on May 24, 1924, under the chairmanship of Jinnah.

The disintegrated state of politics offered an opportunity to the British to re-establish their old relations with the Muslims and bring them back into the loyalists' fold. The means the Government employed to oppose the movement was to organise counter propaganda through the agency of the loyal elements and to establish Aman Sabhas. Reading's publication early in March 1922 of his telegram to the Secretary of State pleading the cause of the Turks was a step in this direction. The telegram to Montagu explained the urgency of publication :

"So important is it, for the Government of India to range itself

openly on the side of Moslem India, that we press for permission to publish the foregoing (telegram) .... forthwith."[3]

The permission authorizing publication cost Montagu his post.

Then the expected happened. The Government of India's Annual Report 1921-22 records :

"The publication of this document ... produced a great effect upon Muslim opinion. The non-cooperation movement was in consequence considerably weakened, since many even of the most violent Khilafatists began to believe that there was more to be gained by supporting Government in its honest efforts than by adhering to the hitherto infructuous schemes of Mr. Gandhi."

And, "but the interest excited in all quarters by the manifest desire of Lord Reading's Government to satisfy Muslim opinion still continued to exist as a factor hostile to Mr. Gandhi."[4]

The result was that atavistic tendencies asserted themselves. Old feelings of rivalry, jealousy and fear sprang up again to poison the relations between the two communities. The old dissensions, based upon complaints like cow-slaughter and music before mosque, were raked up and new causes of disagreement like *Shuddhi* or *Tabligh* and *Sangathan* or *Tanzim* were added.

Jawaharlal points out in his autobiography, "It is possible, however, that this sudden bottling up of a great movement contributed to a tragic development in the country. ... The suppressed violence had to find a way out, and in the following years this perhaps aggravated the communal trouble."[5]

Khaliquzzaman agreed with this opinion. He wrote : "It would not be a far-fetched conclusion that fissiparous tendencies in the Hindu and Muslim sections of the people thereafter found opportunity to develop in the enforced quiet and self-imposed restraint raising fears and doubts about the capacity of India to win freedom through civil disobedience."[6]

III. Gandhiji's Three-Point Programme

As Gandhiji scanned the scene of confusion and muddle, he came to the conclusion that an immediate resumption of civil disobedience was impossible, and that a period of silent but strenuous preparation was essential. He therefore devoted the next few years to quiet work

[3] Hyde, Montgomery, *Lord Reading*, p. 372.
[4] *India in 1921-22*, pp. 103-04.
[5] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, p. 86.
[6] Khaliquzzaman, Choudhry, *Pathway to Pakistan*, pp. 63-64.

on the three-point programme—khadi, Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability. This entailed enlarging the army of voluntary workers, expanding the organisation to cover the whole country with all its villages and towns, training and disciplining the volunteer corps and raising funds. In order to strengthen relations between the educated urban class and the rural masses he endeavoured to modify the rules of the Congress regarding the conditions of membership. At the same time he made heroic efforts to dispel misunderstandings between the Hindu and Muslim communities and to uplift the oppressed and down-trodden scheduled castes.

In Gandhiji's view spinning on the wheel was the pivot of the entire plan. It was the master key with which the lock on the door to Swaraj could be opened. Neither ridicule, nor misunderstanding, nor opposition could shake his faith in *charkha,* and he bent all his energies towards its popularization and in explaining its virtue both by example and precept.

Gandhiji started the campaign for khadi work in the Belgaum Congress session over which he presided in December 1924. As the President he dwelt mainly on two topics in his address—(1) maintenance of the unity of the Congress and suspending non-cooperation, and (2) *Khaddar.* In order to commit Congressmen to its cause he persuaded the Congress to alter its franchise by making the spinning of 2,000 yards of yarn per month as a qualification instead of the payment of four annas a year.

In his concluding speech he exhorted the members in these words : "Go throughout your districts and spread the message of *Khaddar,* the message of Hindu-Muslim unity, the message of anti-untouchability and take up in hand the youth of the country and make them the real soldiers of Swaraj."[7]

He called this change in the franchise a tremendous forward step, and explained, "Now the Congress expects every one to spin 2,000 yards per month or to get that quantity spun for him by another. Thus the workers have to keep in continuous touch with the spinners. Therein lies, in my opinion, the strength of the franchise. It gives the people political education of the high type."[8] He expected that the workers of at least five million wheels could easily be enrolled as Congressmen. Others who devoted half an hour daily for the sake of the nation, their friends and neighbours could swell their numbers. Thus the weight and influence of the Congress would be greatly enhanced.

The appeal found a response from all parts of the country. Both the Hindus and Muslims were enthusiastic. Apart from issuing the

[7] Tendulkar, D. G., *Mahatma,* Vol. II, p. 228.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 232.

appeal, Gandhiji undertook a tour of the country in order to propagate his views as widely as possible. He said, "I travel because I fancy that the masses want to meet me. I certainly want to meet them. I deliver my simple message to them in few words and they and I are satisfied. It penetrates the mass mind slowly but surely."[9]

He toured in the provinces of Gujarat, Madras, Bengal, Bihar, U.P. (Uttar Pradesh)† and Kutch. In the month of June he was in Bengal when C. R. Das suddenly died on June 18. Gandhiji, addressing a public meeting to mourn the death, called Das "one of the greatest of men", and then overpowered by grief broke down.

Bengal greatly impressed Gandhiji. He thought it had immense possibilities in many directions. He admired Bengal's talent for spinning, and recommended to India the example of Khadi Pratisthan of Sodepur.

When he came to Bihar he called a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee which met at Patna on September 22. Here some very important decisions were taken. Firstly the Swaraj Party ceased to have a separate existence, but became identified with the Congress. The political work of the Congress was thus entrusted to the Swarajists or pro-changers; while the constructive work with the *charkha* as its fulcrum was handed over to the All-India Spinners' Association. The Association was established as an integral part of the Congress organisation, but with independent existence and powers. It had its own members, office-bearers and executive council.

Thus the Congress constitution dealt with its two main functions—the one performed by the Congress itself and the other by an independent body aided by the Congress, but controlling its own funds and assets separately. The All-India Khaddar Board and the provincial Khaddar boards were affiliated to the Association. The wearing of *Khaddar* was made obligatory for Congressmen.

From Bihar he came to Uttar Pradesh for a two-day visit and then proceeded to Kutch where he spent a fortnight. On November 5, he returned, after spending almost the whole year in touring, to Sabarmati.

Gandhiji's intense and continuous propaganda in favour of *charkha* roused much criticism. But the most formidable attack came from the poet Tagore whom Gandhiji called the Great Sentinel. His reply is a model of courtesy, dignity and nobility. It is deferential but firm, respectful but confident. Gandhiji concedes the poet's greatness but does not shirk from indicating what appears to him to be the weakness of Tagore's argument. As a vindication of the cult of *charkha* it is brilliant. It is based, firstly, on his profound sympathy for the famishing men and women who remain idle for want of work and the half-

[9] *Ibid*, p. 231. † Former United Provinces renamed Uttar Pradesh in 1950.

starved farmers who sorely need to supplement their slender resources; secondly, on his view that it is a means of promoting cooperation among his countrymen in ameliorative activity; and thirdly, on his belief that it will aid in realizing the essential and living oneness of interest of all the millions of India.

At the end of the year he withdrew from politics and devoted practically the whole of 1926 in staying in the Ashram and organising *Khaddar* activities. As a result the work of the All-India Spinners' Association expanded rapidly. One hundred and fifty production centres catering to 1,500 villages were established. During the national week starting on April 6 and commemorating the Satyagraha of 1919 and the Amritsar Jalliawala Bagh massacre he intensified the propaganda. He wrote : "What is that every one can do without much effort and which would increase the wealth of India, which increases the power of organization and makes us feel akin to one another ? The answer unhesitatingly is the spinning wheel."[10]

The success was remarkable. The leader of the Swaraj Party, Motilal Nehru, hawked *Khaddar* in the streets of Allahabad; even school children were inspired. The students of the Gujarat Vidyapith were told, "The only loving tie of service that can bind the villages to us is the spinning wheel."[11]

On the termination of his year of silence he declared, "I have come to the conclusion that we can have Swaraj, even, Ram Raj, if we fulfil the triple programme. . . . I am more convinced than ever that Swaraj is impossible to be attained if there is no Hindu-Muslim unity, if we still suffer from the curse of untouchability, and if our middle classes refuse to understand the gospel of Swadeshi." He added, "Everywhere shall I go forth thus uttering the three articles of my creed, my *Kalma,* my *Gayatri,* so that I may be true to myself and my Master."[12]

In 1927 after the Gauhati (Assam) Congress Gandhiji undertook another all India tour. In January he was in Bengal, from where he paid a flying visit to Banaras. He was in Bihar in the middle of January and then in the Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh). In Nagpur he met Saklatvala, a Communist Member of the British Parliament, and explained to him among other matters his views on *Khaddar.* He wrote in *Young India,* "*Khaddar* delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses." And again, "*Khaddar* has the greatest organising power in it because it has itself to be organised and

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[10] *Ibid.,* p. 294.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 300.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 312.

because it affects all India." And lastly, "I, therefore, work for equitable distribution (of wealth). This I seek to attain through *Khaddar.* And since its attainment must sterilize British exploitation at its centre, it is calculated to purify the British connection. Hence in that sense *Khaddar leads to Swaraj.*"[13]

From C.P. he passed on to Maharashtra in the second week of February, and concluded his tour in the province of Bombay at Poona by the middle of March. In the latter part of the month he travelled in Karnatak where the incessant strain of hard work prostrated him and confined him to bed. But by the end of April he was up again. From June to the end of August he was in Mysore, and then till the last week of October in the Madras Presidency.

From Madras he came to Delhi at the invitation of the Viceroy, who announced the appointment of the Royal Commission with John Simon as the Chairman to report on constitutional reforms. From Delhi he proceeded to Orissa and then from there left for Ceylon. In December he attended the Congress at Madras.

In March 1928, the period of six years for which he was sentenced to imprisonment ended, and although he was unconditionally released in 1924, he felt some delicacy in resuming his political work as he thought, but for his illness, he should have been in prison. He did accept the presidentship of the Congress in 1924, because the conditions were peculiar and the organisation was threatened with disintegration. But apart from the conciliatory effort to keep together the no-changers and pro-changers, he devoted the six years largely to *Khaddar* work. An organisation on a countrywide scale was established, spinning centres were opened in every province and in numerous villages, the supply of raw material, the production and marketing of yarn and cloth were arranged. A sizable fund was collected for aid to the organisation.

It may be difficult to accurately ascertain the actual strength of the scheme. But there is no doubt that an organisation, independent of the Government, entirely under the control of the Congress, tending to bring a part of the economic life of the people under their own management and promising great expansion, had been brought into existence. It was a small but significant step in the direction of self-reliance. The whole of India and all communities were involved in it.

IV. Growing Communal Differences

As a result of the great upheaval which began in 1918 all parties in India came to realize that the main issue before them was the

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 338-40.

attainment of Swaraj, that is, the transfer of power from British into Indian hands. They were no more interested in the idea of progress by stages towards self-government separated by intervals of unknown length. There was hardly any difference of opinion between nationalist and communalist parties in this matter.

It was at the same time recognised by the parties that the Hindu-Muslim unity was the key to Swaraj. Gandhiji and Jinnah held identical views on this question. Gandhiji said, "I agree with Mr. Jinnah that Hindu-Muslim unity means Swaraj."[14] In an article in *Young India* he wrote, "Swaraj for India must be an impossible dream without an indissoluble union between the Hindus and the Muslims of India."[15]

Jinnah, speaking at the Muslim League meeting at Lahore in 1924, said, "We must not forget that one essential requisite condition to achieve Swaraj is the political unity between the Hindus and the Mohammadans. I am almost inclined to say that India will get Dominion Responsible Government the day the Hindus and Muslims are united."[16]

Other leaders repeated the necessity of unity in similar words.

Gandhiji justified his support to the Muslims on the Khilafat issue in these words : "The Khilafat will not recur for another hundred years. If the Hindus wish to cultivate eternal friendship with the Musalmans they must perish with them in the attempt to vindicate the honour of Islam."[17] According to him, "the last and the only way to save the cow is to save the Khilafat."[18]

Much of the vehemence of his sentiments derived from the consciousness that "the cement binding the two is yet loose and wet. There is still mutual distrust. The Muslim masses do not still recognise the same necessity for Swaraj as the Hindus do. . . . Sufficient time has not passed for the national interest to be awakened among the Muslims."[19]

About the causes of the distrust between the two communities he said :

"I know there is much, too much, distrust of one another yet. . . . They (the Hindus) believe that Swaraj means Muslim Raj. . . .

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[14] *Young India*, 29 May 1920. 'Hindu-Muslim Tension—Its Cause and Cure', Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 174.

[15] *Young India*, 6 October 1920, p. 404.

[16] Saiyid, M. H., *Jinnah*, p. 305.

[17] *Young India*, 11 May 1921, p. 408.

[18] *Ibid.*, 21 May 1921, p. 411.

[19] *Ibid.*, 28 July 1921, pp. 413-14.

Muslims, on the other hand, fear that the Hindus being in overwhelming majority will smother them."[20]

The fear of the Hindu majority was first roused by the British mentors of Sir Syed and reiterated by the Muslim leaders on numerous occassions. In order to meet it guarantees of various kinds were proposed in the schemes of Indian Constitution, prepared by the Congress and the League, for security and protection. Evidently freedom and unity were desired by both Hindus and Muslims, but they differed in their concepts of freedom and unity. In the beginning their ideas were vague and indefinite. It was, however, recognised in a general way that the Hindus were in a majority and the Muslims in a minority so far as the religion of the inhabitants of India was concerned. Gradually the idea that they were two separate communities divided by religion took birth with the aid of the British midwife. Naturally the minority first became aware of its individuality. By 1906 this awareness had already assumed a political form. It expressed itself in the demand for separate electorates. The agitation following the partition of Bengal deepened the sense of community and led to the foundation of the Muslim League as a rival to the Indian National Congress. The Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 put the official imprint on and hardened the mould of communalism.

In the evolution of this position the British rulers played the leading role. The process has been described in the chapters of the second and the subsequent two volumes.

A large majority of officials and non-officials regarded the Congress activities with suspicion, and considered it as a mainly Hindu movement for securing independence. Irwin in his article on "The Evolution of Political life in India" states, "From its earliest days it has been mainly a Hindu body."[21]

For the perpetuation of British rule it was therefore necessary to reduce the influence of the Congress and to create rivals to the Hindu community. The obvious strategy to detract the Hindus was to show favours to the Muslims. There are numerous instances of this policy from the earlier times. In the twentieth century Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905, Minto's assurance to the Muslims on October 1, 1906, promising separate representation and weightage to the Muslims, Montagu-Chelmsford's affirmation of these measures in the Reform Act of 1919, are conspicuous.

Olivier, ex-Secretary of State for India, bore witness to British partiality. He said, "I do think it is a fair statement to make that predominantly Englishmen who serve in India have a higher appreciation

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[20] *Ibid.*, 11 May 1921, pp. 406-07

[21] Cumming, Sir J., *Political India* p. 18.

of the Muslem community and think them more capable of dominion than they think the Hindus and especially the Bengalis are."[22]

He had earlier written to the *Times*: "No one with any close acquaintance of Indian affairs will be prepared to deny that on the whole there is a predominant bias in British officialism in India in favour of the Muslim community."[23]

Lord Reading, who had recently returned from India on the completion of his term as Viceroy, vehemently denied the charge, on what appear to be formal and technical grounds.

Thus what was only a social and religious pluralism became consecrated as political multicentrism. The position was confirmed by the Government of India Acts of 1909 and 1919.

If the minority had not as a result of Government action become a political individuality filled with suspicion and fear of the majority community, the problem would have been to provide the normal safeguards for the religion, culture, education, employment and representation of the community in the Constitution.

But after the Acts of 1909 and 1919 this simple solution was impossible. The nature of the problem had changed. The consciousness of community was fast developing into the feeling of nationality. But it took some time before the consciousness became explicit.

During the decade 1913-22, it appeared possible that some sort of federal unity of the two communities might emerge. Gandhiji pursued the idea with passionate zeal. But he was so taken up with the psychological and moral aspects of the problem that he did not give due attention to its political implications. In fact, however, the question of unity or difference was not so much a religious as a political problem. Obviously if it was purely religious, it would have been impossible of solution. History shows the futility of such effort. Kabir, Nanak, Akbar and a host of others failed to reconcile Hinduism and Islam. The same fate has befallen the attempts to bring about the unity of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism or Sunni and Shia sectarianism.

Gandhiji was not politically minded, and although he saw that such trifling affairs as music before a mosque, or cow-slaughter on the occasion of *Baqrid,* were only symptoms of a disease in the vitals of society, he seems to have admitted his inability to eradicate it, for even the twenty-one days' fast in 1924 had produced no effect.

During the days of non-cooperation from 1919 to 1922 hopes of unity ran high. But then they proved to be only temporary.

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[22] Lord Olivier's speech, July 28, 1926, *H. L. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 65, col. 316.

[23] Lord Reading's speech quotes the extract from the article in the *Times*. See *Ibid.*, col. 317.

When the Khilafat leaders invited Gandhiji to cooperate with them, they were required by their followers to remove some theological doubts. They were asked whether the Muslims could accept the help of non-Muslims in such a struggle. The divines assured the doubters that this cooperation was in accord with the practice of the Prophet. He had entered into a covenant with the Jews to fight the hostile pagan Arabs. Hence there was no religious obstacle in making an agreement with the Hindus to fight their enemy—the British Government.

Thus while Gandhiji was thinking in terms of promoting national unity, the mentors of the religious movement were only prepared to accept aid from another distinctive group for a defined particular purpose. In order to induce the Hindus to join in the movement the Khilafatists allowed the extension of the purpose of the movement to include two other items—the rectification of the Panjab wrongs and Swaraj. But as Khalid bin Sayeed points out :

"The Muslims were not so much fighting for freedom of India as they were fighting for the maintenance of the Khilafat in Turkey, whereas for Gandhi the Khilafat was a weapon which he could use to accelerate India's advance towards Swaraj."[24]

In the face of such disparity in aims it was difficult to maintain unity, specially as the temporary Khilafat question required immediate decision and delay in its solution was causing impatience among the Muslims.

The effects of the impatience were becoming manifest in the speeches and writings of the Muslim leaders, and in the reactions of the communal extremists among the Hindus and the Muslims. The attack of the Amir of Afghanistan on the Indian frontier in April 1919 caused considerable unrest among the tribes. Apart from inciting disturbances on the frontier, it excited some Khilafatist leaders to make extravagant statements. Muhammad Ali, for instance, was accused of advising the Muslims to assist the Amir in case of attack upon the British in the cause of Islam.

Then in his statement before the Court at Karachi he declared that he was a Muslim first and anything else afterwards.

Both these declarations created misgivings. Gandhiji offered explanations. He said it was the duty of a non-cooperator not to aid the Government against which he was fighting; and in regard to priorities in loyalty he himself held that conscience came before country.

Abul Kalam Azad had already given a clear and authoritative opinion based on the religious texts (February 29, 1920) to indicate

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[24] Sayeed, Khalid bin. *Pakistan : The Formative Phase* (1960), p. 58.

that it was the duty of the Indian Muslims to defend their country from the aggressors although they might be the Muslims or even the army of the Caliph himself.

It is doubtful if the two explanations removed the distrust.

On the other hand, the Muslim extremists who were straining at the leash were disatisfied with the discipline of non-violence in thought, word and deed. They were talking of adopting other measures if non-cooperation of Gandhian conception failed. Their suspicions were roused when Gandhiji in 1921 met Reading and as a consequence persuaded Muhammad Ali to express regret for his speeches. Of course the game of Reading was to discredit Gandhiji and Muhammad Ali and to break up the Hindu-Muslim alliance.

While both sides were in a jittery state, Hindu-Muslim quarrels began raising their head in different places, in Bengal, in Panjab and other provinces. The worst case was that of Kerala where the Moplah riot of August 1921 took place. The Moplahs perpetrated inhuman atrocities upon the Hindus and forcibly converted some of them to Islam. The news of their evil deeds sent a wave of consternation throughout India. Fortunately, the Congress organisation was able to minimise its effects so that the non-cooperation movement was not affected; nonetheless, a severe shock had been administered to Hindu-Muslim unity.

The suspension of the non-cooperation movement and the incarceration of Gandhiji slackened activity and removed from the field of action the one person who could possibly prevent the breakdown of the fragile union. In his absence fissiparous tendencies began to gather strength rapidly. Two factors strengthened the tendencies—the endeavour of the Government to repair the damage done to British-Muslim friendship by advertising its support to the claims of Turkey, and the measures of the Turkish leaders in regard to the Caliphate. Some Muslims began to think that more could be achieved through the goodwill of the Government than through suffering and sacrifice at the call of the Congress and the Khilafat Conference.

One result of all these happenings was to accentuate the community consciousness of the Muslims and the Hindus and their political apprehensions. Both of them began to regard themselves as separate political entities with separate political interests. The communal riots which grew in ferocity and frequency year by year were one manifestation of the growing separatism and rivalry. What Gandhiji had noticed about mutual fears was coming true. They were levying a heavy toll in the shape of life and property destroyed and ill will amplified.

The dismal tale of savagery which disgraced the history of the years between 1921 to 1929 baffles all description. But history is a

mixture of good and evil, of peaceful progress and bloody conflict. It is necessary in this connection to remember that the atrocious communal conflicts were only outwardly religious. Their real deep-seated cause was political. On the one side, there were anxieties about the future of the community, apprehensions concerning its status and doubts about its economic security; on the other side, the majority entertained fears of extra-territorial loyalties and pan-Islamic ambitions, which held out a threat to India's integrity and independence.

To overcome the doubts and apprehensions both the Hindu and Muslim leaders—the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, made earnest efforts. Unfortunately they failed. Both parties were responsible for the failure. And as Gandhiji later realized, the presence of the third party made the task almost impossible.

The Indian educated class, brought up under British influences, had assimilated British political ideas and was conditioned by British experience. The British nation was comparatively homogeneous and its government unitary; the British political thinkers propounded their theories of parliamentary representative government on the basis of the structure and functioning of a homogeneous British society. For instance, the general constituencies for election to Parliament were territorial divisions—counties and boroughs; special constituencies like the universities were rare. The British society was not a community of communities—*communitas communitatum,* but a community of individuals.

The nationalist leaders projected these ideas into India. But the minorities which felt the pinch and gradually came to realize the place where the shoe pinched, first formulated the demand for separate representation—at the instigation of their British guides, and then expanded it to increase the number of Muslim majority provinces—Sind, North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Panjab, Bengal and Assam, and ultimately to insist upon vesting residuary powers in the provinces, limitation of the powers of the Centre, constitutional guarantees for religious and cultural freedom and a share in the offices.

Other factors which accentuated the differences are noted by Muslim writers. For instance Khalid bin Sayeed writes : "It should be stressed that the sense of Muslim separatism, which is a dominant theme in the Quran, was an equally potent factor which prevented the growth of a common Indian nationalism. In addition, memories of Muslim rule in India not only remained alive, particularly among the upper class Muslims, but were constantly used by them to impress upon the Muslim masses that Muslims having ruled India, should not allow themselves to be ruled by the Hindu majority."[25]

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 7.

Aziz writes: "Foreign rulers are not generally pleased with refractory subjects..., it heartens them to find that a section of the subjugated people is, so to say, on their side or at least not on the side of the subjects. The Muslims were in a minority, and minorities always find it wise to maintain good relations with the ruling powers. Thus the Muslim was thrown into the arms of the British by circumstances, and the Hindus did not like it."[26]

The section of Muslims which threw itself into the arms of the British did so because it was frightened by the memory of the dire consequences of rebellion, and was deeply grateful for the patronage recently extended to it.

Communal Riots

Separatist tendencies based on genuine and fanciful claims and honest and exaggerated differences of opinion on fundamental political problems were responsible for both the ugly expression in the form of conflict and destruction, as well as, for earnest attempts at finding a solution.

The communal riots which unfortunately began in 1921 were largely confined to the towns. They occurred when festivals like *Dussehra* were celebrated when Hindu processions passed with music before mosques at the time of the Muslim prayers, or when the Muslims observed *Muharram* and *Baqrid*. But there lurked behind the screen of religion the assertion of the community's rights. For this, inspiration usually came from rivalries connected with municipal elections which were linked up with provincial and central politics. It was widely believed both by the Hindus and the Musalmans that riots could be prevented if the district authorities—magistrate and superintendent of police, willed so. Jinnah in his evidence before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament to examine the Government of India Reform Bill, 1919, stated, "If you ask me, very often these riots are based on some misunderstanding, and it is because the police have taken one side or the other."[27]

In 1922 and 1923, the dams burst and the flood of violence was let loose. There were riots in the Panjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Bombay, Hyderabad Deccan and Andhra. These riots coming on the top of the Moplah rebellion greatly enhanced tension.

In 1923 the sky was overcast with even darker clouds. The Indian National Congress was splitting into the factions of no-changers and pro-changers. The Swarajists led by C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru were engaged in fighting the elections to the central and provincial

[26] Aziz, K. K., *The Making of Pakistan*, p. 94.
[27] Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims*, pp. 158-59.

legislatures. The Khilafat Committee was in a state of perplexity, and some of its leaders were counselling return to cooperation with the Indian Government.

The Hindu Mahasabha was gaining in popularity. Madan Mohan Malaviya was resuscitating the atrophied organisation, and such Congress stalwarts as Lajpat Rai, Shraddhanand and Jayakar were gravitating towards it. Lajpat Rai had despaired of Hindu-Muslim unity and later Tagore endorsed his views.[28] In the annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Banaras in 1923, Malaviya proposed the formation of a Hindu organisation (*Sangathan*) to protect Hindu interests Shraddhanand started the scheme of reclaiming the Muslim converts (*Shuddhi*).

The Muslim League had been relegated to inanition. But in 1923 it was prodded into activity as a result of Hindu Mahasabha's revival. In 1923 its session was held for the first time after many years in a different place from the venue of the Congress, namely, Lucknow, where the President Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgri made a strong plea for Hindu-Muslim understanding. He gave a warning that the continuance of dissensions would make Swaraj an insubstantial fantasy, "like the pleasing sound of distant drums", and "illusory expectations". During the session Ansari urged the framing of a national pact to ensure unity and harmony among the communities.

But the atmosphere had become vitiated. Kitchlew had started the counter movements of *Tabligh* and *Tanzim*. Fazli Husain advocated the conversion of the Depressed Class Hindus to Islam. The Muslim Leaguers and Khilafatists took up the cry. The resulting riots inflamed passions and exacerbated animosity.

Both sides, however, recognised the evil consequences of the situation. Bhurgri and Ansari tried to stem the tide among the Muslims. Others made similar endeavours. The Congress appointed a committee consisting of Lajpat Rai, Ansari and a Sikh gentleman[29] to draft what is known as the Solan Pact. C.R. Das drew up the Bengal Pact which was discarded by the Congress at Cocanada.

The failure of the conciliatory attempts gave an opportunity to the reactionary elements which dreaded radical changes in the political and social conditions of India to assert themselves. The Muslim extremists threw doubts on the non-communal and secular character of the Congress. Their Hindu counterparts raised the bogey of pan-Islamic designs to revive Muslim ascendancy in India. Separatism was intensi-

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[28] Tagore, Rabindranath, Through Indian Eyes (*Times of India,* 18 April, 1924, Translation of an interview given to a Bengali paper). See Ram Gopal, *op. cit.,* p. 165.

[29] Sardar Mahtab Singh was the Sikh member. When he went to jail Sardar Amar Singh of Jeswal was appointed.

fied. Loud demands on behalf of the Muslim community and stiff resistance by the Hindu leaders filled the air.

Above all, Reading was making efforts, on the one hand, to conciliate the Muslims and to induce them to desert the Congress, and, on the other, to encourage a breach among the Swarajists. He won the goodwill of the Muslims by the publication of his despatch of February 28, 1922, in favour of the Turks. He had signed a treaty with the Amir Amanullah of Afghanistan which reestablished British influence over that country. Its object also was to burst the bubble of Muslim expectations of the Amir's support to their demands, for according to his son "an Afghan treaty would definitely explode those pretensions (of Pan-Islamism)."[30]

In 1924, he was maliciously interested in the quarrel between Jinnah and Motilal Nehru, and expected that Jinnah "would like to enlist the Viceroy's help to recover his freedom of action (from Swarajist-Independent pact) without losing his prestige in the process".[31]

So far as the Swarajists were concerned they were lured by temptations. They were invited to give up the obstructive role and in return were offered membership of committees like the Reforms Enquiry Commitee, Skeen Committee, etc. Ultimately the Government succeeded. Patel was elected by the Legislative Assembly as President, and Motilal Nehru appointed as a member of the Skeen Committee. In the Central Provinces a Swarajist leader, Tambe, was appointed as Executive Counsellor to the Governor. Then the rot set in, and the party of Responsive Cooperation led by Jayakar, Kelkar and Moonje separated itself from the Swarajists.

Jawaharlal, while recognising that the policy of the Government was based on the principle of divide and rule and acknowledging that the Government was thwarting the nationalists in the past and during the present, held that it was useless to complain of the Government; for the unfortunate fact was that "many a Congressman was a communalist under his national cloak."[32]

In this atmosphere communalism grew and some of the staunchest Congressmen inclined towards communal politics. It is not surprising that many Muslim nationalists descended down the slippery slope. The case of Jinnah is pathetic. In 1906 he was acting as the honorary Secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji, President of the Congress of that year. He denounced the principle of separate representation thrust on India by Morley and Minto. In 1913 he joined the Muslim League. He

[30] Reading, the Marquess of; *Rufus Isaacs;* Vol. II, (1914-35), p. 225

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

[32] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *op. cit.*, p. 13

freed it from the influence of the loyalists, and brought it on the same platform as the Congress. He strongly advocated Hindu-Muslim unity and was the chief architect of the Lucknow Pact. Gokhale called him "the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity". He stood firmly and unequivocally for secularism—separation of religion and politics, and refused to take any interest in the religious Khilafat movement. He went to the length of withdrawing from the Congress in 1920, when it adopted, against his opposition, the resolution of Gandhiji on non-cooperation in the interests of Khilafat. In December 1921 and January 1922, he cooperated with Malaviya to arrange a round table conference between the Viceroy and Gandhiji to iron out their differences. In the end he felt disappointed, and in exasperation turned to the League, and breathed fresh life into it. The League and Congress cooperation now came to an end. The League henceforth followed its own independent policies accentuating the rift between the communities. Perhaps the death of C. R. Das, one of the most resolute and perspicacious champions of communal harmony, in June 1925, contributed to the unfortunate consummation.

Gandhiji's Fast

1924 was a year of great gloom—eruption of terrorism in Bengal, infiltration of communism, Cawnpore Conspiracy, abolition of Khilafat, heated debates in the legislatures, tussles between official benches and nationalists, increase of communal tensions and the outbreak of numerous riots all over India.

On the 5th February Gandhiji was released from Yeravda gaol following an operation for appendicitis. What he saw in the country was far from pleasing. The devoted pursuit of a great cause had been replaced by a sense of despair, and the unity of action by factionalism and distrust. The Hindu-Muslim cooperation for which he had striven so zealously had nearly vanished and mutual affection had become transformed into mutual hatred and fear. Communal trouble seemed to hold India in its diabolic grip. Its worst manifestation was at Kohat (N.W.F. Province) on the 9th and 10th September 1924. Unmentionable outrages were committed. There was large-scale killing and looting and the entire Hindu population of the town had to be evacuated.

The cup of misery was filled to the brim, and Gandhiji, sore at heart, determined to expiate for the sins of his erring countrymen by undertaking a fast of twenty-one days from September 18 to October 8. This was the second desperate effort to solve the communal tangle. It was a solemn appeal to the heart of the Hindus and Muslims to refrain from the suicidal courses which they were following.

The fast did sting the conscience of the leaders of various communities, and they assembled in Delhi on September 26 to hammer

a way out. A Unity Conference was held under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru. Three hundred delegates attended, among whom were some of the most eminent representatives of parties and communities. The resolution which they adopted expressed the opinion of the Conference that the utmost freedom of conscience and religion was essential, the desecration of places of worship, the persecution of those changing their faith, and the use of compulsion for conversion were condemned. The members of the Conference took a pledge to make every endeavour to enforce these principles and expressed their unanimous wish for the immediate break of the fast.

Unfortunately the effect of this attempt was only temporary. Gandhiji appealed to the feelings and conscience of the people. His analysis of the problem was psychological and moral, whereas the communal differences were based on gross material interests—economic and political rights and privileges. Therefore, not by verbal assurances however earnest, but by mutual formal agreements, like the Lucknow Pact, could the anxieties and fears be assuaged.

In the absence of such an agreement the object of the twenty-one days' severe penance was defeated. Gandhiji realised it. For the next few years he refrained from taking any steps to disentangle the issue. He spent the years in preparing for the next campaign, probably believing that in active struggle against the Government the proper climate would be created for the meeting of hearts and the removal of barriers.

Unity Efforts

It did not take long for factional politics to reappear, though simultaneously attempts at reconciliation continued. On November 21, 1924, an All-Parties Conference met at Bombay at the instance of Muhammad Ali, the Congress President. Jinnah addressed the gathering and after reviewing the history of the Lucknow Pact he appealed to the Hindus to agree to the Muslim claims: viz., that in the Bengal and Panjab legislatures the Muslim representatives should not be in a minority; and the question of the Muslims' share in the services should be separately decided. However, the Conference did not reach agreement and Gandhiji who attended, came to the conclusion that in the prevailing conditions the framing of a united scheme was not possible.

In the last week of December the Congress, the Khilafat Committee and the Hindu Mahasabha met at Belgaum. Gandhiji who presided over the session of the Congress stated in his address that "minorities who suspect the motives of majorities must be allowed their way The

majorities must set the example of self-sacrifice."[33] Jawaharlal commented, according to Gandhiji the communal problem "could only be solved by goodwill and the generosity of the majority group, and so he was prepared to agree to everything that the Muslims might demand. With foresight and a true sense of values he grasped at the reality that was worthwhile; but others who thought they knew the market price of everything and were ignorant of the true value of everything stuck to the methods of the market place."[34]

Jinnah convened the Muslim League meeting at Bombay at the same time that the Congress met at Belgaum. Earlier at an interview to the press at Lahore and in an appeal to the Hindus in reply to the attack of Muhammad Ali, he had abundantly clarified his stand. He wanted to unite and consolidate Muslim public opinion, but at the same time he desired to bring about a friendly understanding in the Panjab in particular, and a complete settlement between the Hindus and Muslims as was done in 1916. He gave an assurance that, "the League is not in any way going to adopt a policy or programme which will, in the least degree, as far as I can judge, be antagonistic to the Indian National Congress. . . . On the contrary, I believe it will proceed on lines which are best calculated to further general national interests, not forgetting the interests of the Muslim community."[35]

He protested, "I still stand as a tried nationalist, and if the Muslims ought to be organised it is not with a view to prejudicing national advance, but on the contrary, to bring them into line with the rest of India."[36] But as ill-luck would have it, when he was protesting his nationalism, the Swaraj Party was opposing his candidature to the Imperial Legislative Assembly. Later, however, better counsels prevailed and the Swarajist candidate was withdrawn.

At the meeting of the League in Bombay Syed Raza Ali presided. On the Hindu-Muslim dissensions his view was that they were the creation of influential leaders who stirred the flames of hostility from a safe distance, and in order to achieve their personal objects led the people along wrong lines.[37]

Jinnah as Chairman of the Reception Committe repeated, "No power on earth can dare obstruct our demand for Swaraj provided the Hindus and the Muslims become sincerely united."[38] In his view the root of the differences was the question of separate representation. He

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[33] Gandhi, M. K., Presidential Address at Belgaum. Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 227.

[34] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

[35] Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, p. 305.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

[37] Raza Ali, S., Address at the Bombay session of the Muslim League, 1924. Akhtar Husain Mirza, *History of the Muslim League* (Urdu), p. 296.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

gave the instance of Canada, where the quarrel between the French and the English had created the danger of a break-up of the country, but Pitt established two separate provinces and this paved the way for eventual unity in 1867.

The misunderstandings continued to increase and to fray tempers and to lengthen the dismal trail of violence and bloodshed. Communal strife was bad enough. General restlessness was augmented by the obstructionist tactics of the Swarajists in the provincial legislatures and the Legislative Assembly. They were followed by dissensions in the Party itself and the revolt of the Responsivists of the Tilak School, who were more inclined to cooperate with the Mahasabha than with the Swaraj Party.

Unfortunately differences also arose between Gandhiji and the Khilafatist leaders—the Ali Brothers, on the question of the responsibility for Kohat riots.[39] Gandhiji and Shaukat Ali conducted an enquiry at Rawalpindi into the riots and issued separate statements. They differed in their accounts concerning the causes. The difference regrettably created a gulf which continued to widen to the detriment of the cause of unity.

The difference between the communities was reflected in the proceedings of the All-Parties Conference held on 23 January 1925 at Delhi. At Gandhiji's suggestion a committee was appointed to frame such recommendations as would bring about unity among the political parties and draw up a scheme for the representation of all communities in the legislatures. The committee met on March 1, and adjourned and never met again. No agreement was reached, for according to Gandhiji it was impossible in the prevailing conditions of suspicion to frame any scheme that would be called a united scheme.

The All-India Hindu Mahasabha held two sessions at Calcutta and Kanpur on April 11, 1925 and December 29, 1925. Lajpat Rai presided over the first. He condemned the Lucknow Pact as a mistake, opposed any scheme of communal representation, and advocated "a democratic Raj in which the Hindus, Muslims and the other communities of India may participate as Indians and not as followers of any particular religion."[40] He laid stress upon the organisation (*Sangathan*) of the Hindus under the banner of the Mahasabha. Kelkar in his presidential remarks at Kanpur explained why communalism increased. He said, "Without meaning profanation or offence to any religiously minded man, I would say that the real beneficiary of this present much advertised religious movement is not

[39] *Young India*, 26 March 1925.

[40] *Indian Annual Register*, 1925, Vol. I, p. 378.

the soul *vis-a-vis* salvation in the other world, but his desire to have more and better goods appertaining to this very worldly life."[41] He, however, warned the Hindus that the Muslims aimed at "a coherent continuous chain from Angora to Saharanpur of Mahomedan power and influence",[42] and justified on this ground the *Sangathan* and *Shuddhi* movements in defence of the Hindu religion.

The Muslim League met at Aligarh on 30 December 1925 under the chairmanship of Abdur Rahim, a former judge of the Madras High Court. His speech laid the entire blame for communal disharmony at the door of the Hindus and emphasised the need of defending Muslim interests from Hindu attacks. According to him, some Hindu leaders had even spoken of driving the Muslims out of India as Spaniards had expelled the Moors.[43] Among the resolutions adopted at the meeting were : (1) the immediate appointment of a royal commission to prepare a scheme for responsible government; (2) the provision of adequate representation of the minorities in all legislative bodies; and (3) the fixation of separate electorates for minority communities.

There was no relief in the situation, no abatement in the riots. The worst riot of the year occurred at Calcutta. It lasted for six weeks in April and May, 1926. Along with other heinous crimes a deplorable feature was the desecration of numerous places of worship. With C. R. Das's death in the middle of June 1925 and Gandhiji's withdrawal from politics in January 1926, the forces of unity were much weakened. The communal organisations—the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, continued to reaffirm their well-known views on the communal problems.

On December 23, Shraddhanand was murdered by a young Muslim fanatic. In January 1927 the author of the scurrilous *Rangila Rasul* who had been sentenced to 18 months, imprisonment by the lower court was acquitted by the High Court. Then in the *Vartaman* (a magazine from Amritsar) an article was published attacking Muhammad. The Muslims were infuriated and outbreaks of violence occurred in many places. The Mullahs incited the tribes of the Frontier against the Hindus, which led to their persecution and exodus to Peshawar. There was no relaxation in tension in 1927. But from April 1928 signs of improvement appeared in the situation. This was due to the turn which the announcement of the appointment of the Simon Commission gave to the political situation—another confirmation of the view that the Hindu-Muslim differences were emotionally

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[41] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 350.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 351.

[43] Akhtar Husain, Mirza, *op. cit.* p. 349.

political and not religious. Religion was the cover, not the core of the matter.

The tragedy was that while both the Hindus and the Muslims were anxious for an early transfer of power, and both realized that in unity lay the secret of success, they were unable to resolve the riddle of the nature of unity. One thought in terms of unity as fusion and obliteration of communal moulds, the other of unity as federation in which group individuality was not destroyed.

The numerous attempts to ensure unity during the years 1924 to 1929 are a proof of the earnestness of the search for this elusive article.

The national pact of 1923, the Bengal Pact of the same year, the Unity Conference of Delhi in September 1924 and the setting up of a Unity Panchayat (committee), the All Parties Conference at Bombay in November 1924, the unity conference presided over by Irwin at Simla in September 1927, the Unity Conference organised by the Congress in 1927, and the All-Parties Conference in March and May 1928 at Delhi which appointed a committee with Motilal Nehru as President to draft a constitution for India, illustrate how real was the hankering after unity.

Moreover the efforts were not limited to special conferences; the permanent organisations like the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League persisted in the pursuit of the Holy Grail, unsuccessfully alas ! Several times it appeared as if it was within grasp, but every time hopes were dashed to the ground.

The Lucknow Pact of 1916 was the result of more than a decade of argument and discussion. It embodied a compromise and rested on a delicate balance of considerations. It attempted to adjust the explosive centrifugal force of separate electorates by containing it within a representative scheme which acted as a counterpoise. This balance was destroyed by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Act of 1919. The Act confirmed the system of separate representation and gave a stimulus to the development of separatism not only in the Muslim majority provinces, but also in the whole of India.

The authors of the Act not only rejected the plea of the Nationalists, but, what is astonishing, they paid no heed to the weightly advice from unprejudiced and detached quarters, like the Round Table. What is even more surprising is that Montagu, the Secretary of State, who expressed the opinion on December 3, 1919, "nobody objects more than I do to communal representation, I belive it to be a great mistake,"[44] disregarded the warning of Curtis and, in flagrant

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[44] House of Commons, December 3, 1919. Quoted by Olivier, Secretary, of State, in the debate in the House of Lords, June 3, 1924. *Indian Annual Register*, 1924, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 771.

contradiction to his own opinion, incorporated the mischievous principle in the Act of 1919.

The result was that the Lucknow Pact was repudiated, and the whole controversy about separate electorates and Muslim demands was opened up again. The same fate befell Das's Bengal Pact which was disapproved by the Congress at its session presided over by Muhammad Ali. Subsequent efforts to resurrect it for Bengal failed.

Another promising essay was undertaken by Jinnah in 1927. It was a matter of great courage on his part that in spite of the opposition of the section of the Muslim League led by Muhammad Shafi and the disapprobation of the disappointed Secretary of State, Birkenhead, who advised Reading and Simon to "leave Jinnah high and dry", he persuaded the Muslim leaders who met at Delhi in March 1927 to cooperate with the Congress. In December the League appointed a committee to draft a constitution for India in consulation with the Working Committee of the Congress, and laid down the guidelines. They affirmed the willingness of the Muslims to abandon separate electorates in favour of joint electorates with the reservation of seats fixed in proportion to the population of different communities, on condition that Sind was formed into a separate province and reforms were introduced in the N.W.F. Province and Baluchistan. The same concessions to the Hindu minorities in the Muslim majority provinces were promised in the form of reservation of seats in proportion to population as Muslims would get in Hindu majority provinces.[45]

The All-India National Convention met at Calcutta to consider the Nehru report. Tej Bahadur Sapru made a moving appeal for the acceptance of Jinnah's terms. Jinnah assured the members that the Muslim League wanted the cooperation of the Hindus and Muslims in order to attain Swaraj. Jayakar, however, strongly dissented from the proposal, and questioned Jinnah's claim to represent the Muslims. He warned that in case of acceptance the Mahasabha would rebel and jeopardise the whole scheme of the Nehru report. Jinnah pleaded, "I am not speaking as a Musalman but as an Indian. And it is my desire to see that we get seven crores of Musalmans to march along with us in the struggle for freedom. I want you, therefore, to rise to that statesmanship which Tej Bahadur Sapru describes."[46]

Jinnah was given a short shrift and had to leave greatly disappointed. Muhammad Ali, who was closely associated with the Congress so far, also felt annoyed. Both came to the conclusion that the Congress was so dominated by the Mahasabha mentality

[45] Akhtar Husain, Mirza, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

[46] Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 434-35.

that the Muslims could not expect any fair deal from it. The conclusion, right or wrong, had tragic consequences.

V. Swaraj Party and Opposition from within

In the winter of 1920 the elections under the Act of 1919 were held to constitute the legislatures. The Indian National Congress had resolved to boycott them. Thus the field was left to the Moderates and others. As a result a number of prominent leaders of the Moderate Party were returned, and among them were two distinguished men—Srinivasa Sastri (the Council of State) and Sivaswami Aiyer (the Legislative Assembly).

The Moderates or the Liberals constituted an opposition of well informed and able legislators who rendered a good account of their stewardship in the first Parliament. There was in fact little difference between them and the Nationalists or Extremists in political aims. Only the former were inclined to accept the principle of gradualism in the process of political advance, while the latter regarded the transfer of power as an urgent and immediate necessity. The real difference between them was in regard to the method of achieving their aim. The Liberals were irrevocably wedded to the constitutional method—moral pressure exercised through all the available lawful agencies—legislatures, public platform, press, deputations to Government in India and England, and so forth.

The Nationalists believed that not by argument and reason but by direct action based on mass support could the imperialist possessors of power be made to yield. According to them there was no instance in history where the alien rulers had given up their domination over their subjects without war and violence. As war in India was impracticable, a non-violent struggle—non-cooperation and civil disobedience, was the only course open. For some, the non-violent non-cooperation was a principle of conscience and faith, for others a matter of expediency.

The Liberals endeavoured during their term of office in the legislatures to bring about speedy advance towards responsible government.

The session of the reformed Parliament was inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught who was specially sent by the King to mark the extraordinary importance of the occasion. He appealed to India to forget the misunderstandings, to bury the past and to cooperate in working the new constitution. Chelmsford assured the Parliament that the principle of autocracy which had not been wholly discarded in the past was definitely abandoned. The conception of benevolent

despotism was finally renounced, "and in its place was substituted that of a guiding authority whose role it would be to assist the steps of India along the road that in the fulness of time would lead to complete self-government within the Empire."[47]

Chelmsford was very much mistaken if he imagined that his euphemistic phrases promising to substitute autocracy immediately by a guiding authority and grant of self-government in an indefinite and remote future, would deceive the importunate and restless people of India. His successor soon discovered the mistake, for hardly had the echo of these words ceased to reverberate through the corridors of the Council Hall, when the opposition attack started with a bang. One after another resolutions were moved—to punish the officers responsible for the brutal repressive acts in the Panjab and especially Amritsar, for the payment of compensation to their victims, and to establish a tariff commission to protect Indian industry.

The attack was sustained in subsequent sessions. In the Simla session of 1921, the progressive members formed the Democratic Party. Resolutions were moved to expedite the institution of Swaraj and to Indianize services—civil and military. But a sensation was created when in the debate for grants for the year 1922-23 the Assembly defeated the Government on the demands, effected cuts, and rejected the proposed enhancement in the salt tax, and cotton excise duty. The Press Act was abolished at their instance.

Some of the successes of the Democratic Party were, however, nullified by the Government. The Viceroy in virtue of his powers of certification restored the tax on salt, placed the demands for rapid Indianization of services into cold storage, and negatived the attempts of Messrs. Sastri and Sapru to establish equality between India and the Dominions.

Nevertheless Indian opinion made itself felt as it secured some of its objectives, for example, attaining a measure of fiscal autonomy, introducing Indianization in the army, transferring management of some railways to the state, initiating removal of racial discrimination in criminal trials, repealing some repressive laws, and procuring measures of social welfare.

The term of the first Parliament ended with the reassertion of the autocracy which Chelmsford had solemnly abjured.

The second Parliament opened on January 31, 1924. Some of the Provincial Councils had already started—for instance, the United Provinces Council met on the 7th, the Central Provinces and Bihar and Orissa Councils on the 15th, the Bengal Council on the 22nd,

[47] Rushbrook Williams, L. F., *India in 1921-22*, p. 47.

the Madras Council on February 5, and the Bombay Council on February 18.

The new legislatures were different in their composition from the first ones, for in 1923 the Swaraj Party had entered the field. It was organised by Das and Nehru on January 1, 1923, for they had felt that the aggressive activity of the Congress could not be continued after two years of an extraordinarily strenuous struggle, and the constructive programme of the no-changers was not capable of maintaining the elan of the people. They had also realized that the work in the Councils was useful in various ways. Das had argued that the machinery of Government and especially its legislative part constituted a powerful instrument of propaganda, and it was necessary to capture it in order to blunt its harmful operations.

The Councils provided a platform for nationalist propaganda which would attract the educated classes and keep up their spirit of resistance. They offered a wide field for launching an attack on the policies and measures of Government, to make the people of the world aware of the grievances of India and to expose the wrongs perpetrated by the rulers. Another advantage was that the bureaucracy was confronted with reasoned criticism of policies and cogent comments on principles of responsible government, which though often denied in the interests of Governmental exigencies, did disturb the complacency of the rulers, and made them conscious of the weakness of their case. Englishmen steeped in the traditions of parliamentary government were so conditioned as to pay heed to parliamentary methods of the opposition.

The elections were held in November 1923 and the Swaraj Party achieved remarkable success. In the Imperial Legislative Assembly out of 105 elected members, 47 were Swarajists, who with the aid of the Nationalists led by Malaviya and Independents like Jinnah, could command a majority against the Government bloc of official and nominated members.

In two provinces—Bengal and the Central Provinces, they were able to form the majority. In these provinces it was possible for them to paralyse the activities of the Councils and even in the Assembly they could win resounding victories over the Government. In the provinces of Bombay and the United Provinces, the Swarajists were strongly represented.

The Governor of Bengal offered to Das to assume charge of the transferred part of Government. But Das, in view of the policy of non-cooperation from within adopted by the Swaraj Party, refused the offer. The Council asserted itself vigorously and passed resolutions for the release of political prisoners and the repeal of repressive laws. Then by refusing to approve a number of grants and rejecting the

demand for the salaries of the Ministers, produced a deadlock which had to be broken by the Governor by the use of his power of certification. This was virtually a confession of the failure of Reforms.

Similar events happened in the Central Provinces. Early in the session a vote of no-confidence in the ministers was adopted by the Council by a large majority, then the entire budget was thrown out. In the emergency thus created, the Governor in the exercise of his statutory powers authorized expenditure on the reserved subjects almost wholly, and on the transferred subjects at the minimum required for the carrying on of each department. But as he had no authority to restore the grant for the salaries of the ministers he was obliged to transfer the administration of the departments from the ministers to the Executive Councillors. Here, too, the Swarajists had succeeded in demonstrating their power to hold up a constitution which they considered unsatisfactory.

In Bombay, too, a vote of no-confidence was carried.

The resolve of the Swaraj Party to non-cooperate from within was fully vindicated in the Councils where the Party commanded a majority. But in the Central Assembly the situation was different. In a house of 145 members the Swarajists counted about 47, but whenever co-operation was forthcoming from the others they managed to defeat the Government, which happened on a number of occasions. The Party was obliged to move cautiously, offering opposition only where it was sure of the support of a sufficient number of other members, but sometimes acting alone where its principle so demanded.

The leader of the Swaraj Party in the Assembly was Motilal Nehru and he had such colleagues as Vithalbhai Patel, Ramaswamy Aiyangar, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Bipin Chandra Pal and others. A group of members who recognised Jinnah as their leader joined the Swarajists to form the Nationalist Party for working together in the Assembly.

In the Council of State Srinivasa Sastri, Rangaswamy Ayyangar, with a number of Liberals and Independents, lent their support to the nationalist causes.

The views of the Swaraj Party, as stated in their manifesto, caused much alarm. The Party was plied with advice and warnings from many quarters, for instance, the Secretary of State, the Viceroy, the Liberals and others, to refrain from following their proclaimed negative course. In response Motilal Nehru promised to cooperate if the Government would show a genuine desire to meet their demands.

The opportunity for the declaration of Government intentions arose soon. For on the 5th February a resolution was moved urging the early revision of the Government of India Act 1919, in order to secure for India full self-governing Dominion Status. The reply of

the Government was the reiteration of the familiar arguments about India's unfitness for responsible government, let alone self-government of the Dominion Status type. The considerations which weighed with the Government were the apprehensions of the Indian States, the interests of the British capitalists, the prospects of the British services —civil and military, the requirements of defence. Above all, declared the Government spokesman, "there are the minority communities," for the "conception of full responsible government with Dominion Status meant entrusting the interests of minorities in the hands of a majority."[48]

The last was the trump card of the Government to checkmate the Nationalists and strengthen the fears of the Muslim community. Not to leave the peace of mind of the Hindu community undisturbed, he asked, "With a powerful neighbour this question of defence was important and further, in case of aggression, what would be the attitude of an important community in India?"[49] The question was intended to send a thrill of horror down the spine of the Hindu community. This masterly manoeuvre of playing one community against another by the use of "*suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*" miscarried, and on February 18, the Assembly by 76 votes against 48 adopted Motilal Nehru's amendment which ran as follows :

"This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council to take steps to establish full Responsible Government in India and for the said purpose

(a) to summon at an early date a representative Round Table Conference to recommend with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities the scheme of a constitution for India, and

(b) after dissolving the Central Legislature to place the said scheme for approval and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a statute."[50]

Malcolm Hailey had made the attitude of Government clear beyond doubt. The advice of the Secretary of State and the Viceroy stood exposed, it was an invitation not to cooperate but to submit. The speeches from the Government benches were a challenge to the opposition. The Nationalists naturally reacted in the only way national interest and dignity demanded.

The second term of the Council was a prolonged struggle between the two sides—the legions of Government and the phalanx of the

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[48] Imperial Legislative Assembly, debate on the demand for responsible Government, February 8, 1924. Speech of Sir Malcolm Hailey, Home Member of the Government of India

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid.*

Nationalists. The Government deployed all its resources to defeat the Nationalists, to encourage factionalism and defections in the party so as to scatter their forces. The Nationalists used all their forensic skill and parliamentary art to destroy the prestige of Government and demonstrate the hollowness of the claim that the Reforms had ended autocracy.

The battle was joined when the budget for the year 1924-25 was presented on February 29 by the Finance Member of the Government. On the 10th of March took place the voting of supplies; demand after demand was either totally refused, or cut down. The discomfiture of Government was completed when on March 17, the Finance Bill was thrown out, in spite of the threat of the Home Member that the rejection would not help India on the path of responsible government.

As a consequence of these transactions the Government considered it politic to offer a sop to pacify the Nationalist Party. It was announced on June 4 that the Government had decided to appoint an Enquiry Committee to investigate the difficulties arising from or defects inherent in the working of the Government of India Act of 1919 and to suggest remedies to remove them. The Committee consisted of 3 officials and 6 non-officials with Sir Alexander Muddiman as Chairman.

An important matter which came up before the Assembly in March 1924 was the report of the Tariff Board which was appointed to examine the question of extending protection to the manufacture of steel in India.

The Tariff Board was the result of the recommendations of the Tariff Commission which examined the tariff policy of Government earlier and submitted a report. The Tariff Board advised the Government (1) to afford effective protection to the basic industry of steel, and (2) to assume unfettered powers to regulate tariff duties.

As these recommendations were in consonance with the demands of the Nationalists, and sought to remove a long standing grievance by the adoption of the principle of protection in place of that of free trade, the bill embodying the recommendations after some amendments was passed by the Assembly on June 5 and the Council of State on June 9.

In September 1924, however, the report of the Lee Commission was placed before the Assembly for approval. The Commission had been appointed to allay the apprehensions which the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms had created in the mind of the services regarding their future. In order to create a sense of security two measures were suggested, (1) to make the all-India service independent of the popular government in India, by retaining their control in the hands of the

Secretary of State, and (2) to establish a Public Service Commission in India for recruitment, disciplinary control and protection of services employed in the transferred field.

So far as the pay and allowances of the services were concerned, a number of concessions were recommended, specially for the benefit of the British members, like overseas pay, exchange compensation allowance, return passages for the family for visits to England, additional pension to members of councils.

The Report also made proposals for the increase of the Indian element of the civil service by raising the percentage of Indians to fifty.

These recommendations made such generous concessions to the services—especially its European part, and such niggardly recommendations concerning Indianization that it was not possible for the Nationalist Party in the Assembly to accept them. Hence at the instance of the leader, Motilal Nehru, the Report was rejected.

The Council of State, however, adopted the Government resolution without amendment.

Early in 1925, another battle royal took place between the nationalists and the Government. On January 20, the Viceroy in his opening speech announced that both the Government of India and the Secretary of State had agreed to the promulgation of the Bengal Ordinance 1 to supplement the Criminal Law in Bengal of October 25, 1924, without consulting the legislature. His justification was, "The responsibility was of a nature which could not be shared, and it would not be right or proper for me to try to share it with you or place it on your shoulders."[51]

On January 28, the following resolution was moved urging Government, "that steps be taken forthwith to supersede by an Act of the Indian Legislature the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance of 1924". On February 5, the debate concluded and was put to vote. The resolution moved was carried by 58 votes against 45. The Ordinance was struck down.

But on March 23, the Government brought forward a bill to supplement the sections of the Ordinance which were beyond the competence of the provincial government of Bengal. Although a number of alterations were made in the bill, none of its offensive clauses were removed. The bill was defeated in the Lower House, and then it was placed before the Upper House with a message from the Governor-General certifying that it was essential for tranquillity

[51] Lord Reading's Opening Address to the Legislative Assembly, dated January 20, 1925. Legislative Assembly Debates (Official Report), Vol. V. No. 7, p. 9.

of Bengal and recommending that it be passed as originally introduced in the Assembly. The Upper House had hardly any choice and passed the certified bill.

The budgets for the year 1925-26 were considered in this session. Unfortunately the Nationalists were not united regarding their attitude towards them. The Swarajists desired to follow the line adopted in the previous year which meant rejecting the demands wholesale and throwing out the Finance Bill. The theory by which they justified their action was contained in the dictum 'no supplies till the grievances are removed'. In any case they were bound by their mandate of non-cooperation from within. The Nationalists and the Moderates did not agree that the Government could be or should be paralysed by a wholesale refusal of demands. For such a procedure inevitably invited the Governor-General to exercise the power of certification. It was not possible by this means to force the transfer of power, nor was an immediate total transfer feasible. Thus two divergent political philosophies were at work, and the result was that the Nationalists were only able to secure some cuts in the demands of the two budgets and castigate the Government on its mistakes of omission and commission.

The differences were accentuated by other factors. The membership of the councils offered tempting opportunities to ambitious men to aspire for influential positions and offices and tantalizing openings for ministries and executive councillorships.

Another cause was the clash of personalities. Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Swaraj Party, was a domineering person who did not brook differences of opinion lightly. Jinnah was proud, aloof and aristocratic, ready to take offence and give provocation. It was difficult for the two to agree, nor could they get on with one another easily. Misunderstandings were bound to arise specially when basic attitudes diverged.

The rift among the Nationalists notwithstanding, the Government suffered a resounding defeat when the Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee came up for discussion on September 7, 1925.

As would be recalled, Motilal Nehru had moved in the Assembly a resolution for the appointment of the Round Table Conference to undertake the revision of the Act of 1919. The Government did not accept the resolution, but agreed to appoint an Enquiry Committee to consider the defects in the working of the Act and suggest remedies to cure them within the four corners of the Act.

The Committee under the chairmanship of Alexander Muddiman and with eight other members submitted its report in March 1925. The members were divided and so there was a majority and a minority report. The majority consisted of Muddiman, the Home Member of

Government, Muhammad Shafi, the Law Member of the Executive Council of the Governor-General, the Maharajah of Burdwan, and two European members—Arthur Froom and Henry Moncrief Smith. The minority was made up of four Indians—Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sivaswami Aiyer, M. A. Jinnah and R. P. Paranjpye.

The main difference between the two reports concerned the question whether the defects found in the working could be remedied without a radical revision of the Act of 1919 or not. The majority was of the opinion that it was too early to undertake a revision and that the working was capable of improvement without any radical alteration of the Act. The minority, on the other hand, agreed with the Government of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) which described the Act as "a complex confused system, having no logical basis, rooted in compromise and defensible only as a transitional expedient",[52] and came to the conclusion that the reforms had been given a fair trial, and that no minor remedies short of a fundamental remodelling of the Act would produce any substantial results.

The discussion in the Assembly was started (7th September) on Muddiman's motion to accept the underlying principle of majority report and to consider its detailed recommendations. Motilal Nehru moved an amendment that the Parliament should recognize the right of India to responsible government, and immediately summon a Round Table Conference of Indian parties to frame a constitution and embody it in an Act.

After a two-day debate the amendment was put to vote and carried with 45 voting for and 14 against it.

Split in the Swaraj Party

Meanwhile, outside the legislature events were happening which affected the future of the Swaraj Party. On June 16, 1925, C. R. Das suddenly passed away to the great misfortune of the country. During the short period since founding the Swaraj Party he had demonstrated qualities of leadership of an exceptional kind. Not only did he organise the Swaraj Party on an all-India scale against opposition from his own colleagues of the Congress including Gandhiji, he succeeded in winning over Gandhiji and inducing the Congress to identify the party with itself. In Bengal he brought the working of the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution to a standstill, notwithstanding temptations of office and threats of the Bengal Ordinance of October 1924. He rose to great heights of statesmanship first when he formulated the Bengal Pact which could become the charter of Hindu-Muslim unity

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[52] The Reforms Enquiry Report, the report of the minority, *Indian Annual Register*, 1925, Vol. I, p. 38.

and Indian independence if narrow-mindedness born of unsubstantial fears had not sabotaged it, and again when he extended his hand of cooperation to Britain in his Faridpur Conference address, which the rulers of India failed to grasp to the great detriment of relations between India and England.

The death of Das was a severe blow to the Swaraj Party. Already the parties which had so far given their support to its fight with the Government in the councils were showing signs of discontent and dissent. Soon the inner differences in the Party appeared on the surface leading to a split. Disruption began when on October 8, it was announced that Tambe, a prominent leader of the Swarajists in the Central Provinces, had accepted the membership of the Executive Council of the province.

The incident led to a bitter controversy. Motilal Nehru, the leader of the Party, demanded from Tambe an explanation and called a meeting of the All-India Swaraj Party to consider the matter at Nagpur. Before the meeting took place, Jayakar, the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Legislative Council of Bombay, issued a statement asserting that Tambe's action was analogous to the acceptance of the salaried post of the President of the Legislative Assembly by V. J. Patel. He suggested a re-examination of the policy of refusing office and asked whether time had not come when places of influence, power and responsibility ought to be unhesitatingly taken. A number of statements and counter-statements appeared in the papers which indicated that deep schism was developing in the Swaraj Party.

The resolution of the Executive Committee of the Party at Nagpur on November 2, condemning Tambe's action in violation of the constitution as a gross breach of discipline had the unfortunate effect of uniting most of the Maharashtrian members of the legislature against the Executive Committee of the Swaraj Party. Messrs Jayakar and Kelkar resigned from the Executive Committee and formed a new party of responsive cooperationists with the intention of giving a fillip to the council entry programme "by occupying every place of power, initiative and responsibility and giving no quarter to the bureaucracy".[53]

Attempts to bring together the Swarajist and Responsivist leaders together and restore the unity of the Party failed.

When the Legislative Assembly met for its winter session at Delhi in January 1926 dark clouds were gathering on the horizon of the Swaraj Party. A tug of war had started between those members of

[53] The Indian National Congress 1925, discussion on Motilal Nehru's resolution regarding the political programme, Jayakar's speech. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1925, Vol. II, p. 336.

the councils who were feeling tired of the exhausting tactics of unrelieved obstruction and the others who realised the futility of work in the councils whether as members of the opposition or as cooperators with Government.

The Responsivists sought to end the crisis by deciding to assume responsibility of office in spite of the limited scope of the Reforms. The Congress, on the other hand, decided at the meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Delhi (7th March) that in view of the refusal of the Government to respond to the demands of the Swaraj Party as formulated in the statement of Das at Faridpur and in the resolutions and amendments moved by the Swaraj Party in the Assembly, the members of the Party should walk out of the legislature to register their protest.

The Viceroy, Lord Reading, took full advantage of the situation and in his opening address to the Assembly on January 20, 1926, made conciliatory gestures to attract those who were chafing under the hard discipline of the Swaraj Party. Much sympathy was expressed for the Indians suffering from discriminatory and harsh treatment in the British colonies. It was announced that a commission to investigate the causes of backwardness in agriculture and to recommend measures to remove them had been appointed. Concerning the all-important question of political reform he regretted the refusal of the Indian leaders to utilize the opportunities offered by the Act of 1919, and observed :

"A more generous response would, I feel sure, have evoked generous action. The heart of Britain would have been won by immediate and sympathetic acceptance of the advance she had made and a new situation would have been created based upon mutual trust and goodwill."[54]

Motilal Nehru took the speech as a challenge to the Swaraj Party, to capture the imagination of the people and to deflect them from supporting the nationalist movement.

In order to test the bonafides of the Government, resolutions were moved for the release or trial, in accordance with the law, of the detenus of Bengal and to repeal the infamous Regulation III of 1818. Both the motions were opposed by the Government, showing that notwithstanding the address of the Viceroy the attitude of the Government had not changed. There had been no move to meet the demand of constitutional advance. The Nationalist reaction was to move rejections and cuts on demands in the railway budget. The general budget for the year 1926-27 was placed before the Assembly on March 1. The leader of the Swaraj Party, before the beginning of the discussion on demands

[54] The Viceroy's Opening Address. The Legislative Assembly, Delhi, January 20, 1926. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1926, Vol. I. p. 160.

on March 8, made a statement recalling how the hand of cooperation and friendship stretched out in spite of humiliating experience was rudely spurned by the Government. He solemnly warned the Government in these words :

"There is no more use for us here. We go out into the country to seek the suffrage of the electorates once more. We do not give up the fight. . . . We have no misgivings either about our fate or our deserts, and we go forth into the country to put it to the touch to win or to lose it all. We feel that we have no further use for these sham institutions, and the least we can do to vindicate the honour and self-respect of the nation is to get out of them and go back to the country for work. In the country we will try to devise those sanctions which alone can compel any Government to grant the demands of the people."[55]

Immediately after the statement, the Swaraj Party walked out of the Assembly Chamber in a body. On this the President, V. J. Patel, took the extraordinary step to adjourn the House. When the House met again on March 11, Jinnah moved the omission of the demand for the Executive Councillors' allowances, to record a vote of censure on the Government for its policy with regard to the Reforms. The motion was put to the vote and lost, which proved that in the absence of the Swarajists the opposition consisting mainly of the Nationalist Party was ineffective.

The withdrawal of the Swaraj Party from the Assembly was an intimation that the end of the struggle for Swaraj from within the councils was not far off. But during the last session at Simla the Party attended the Assembly whenever occasion demanded. This happened when the Currency Bill fixing the ratio between the rupee and the pound was introduced in the last week of August.

New elections were now approaching and hence attempts were undertaken to restore the solidarity of the opposition. Unfortunately efforts of Gandhiji, Mrs. Naidu, the Congress President of the year (1926), and others failed. Messrs. Jayakar, Kelkar, Moonje and others organised a separate party known as the Responsive Cooperation Party.

Malaviya who agreed with the views of the Responsivists called an informal meeting of the leaders and prominent Congressmen from the provinces at Delhi on 11th and 12th September to form a united party of Congressmen. The meeting decided to set up an Independent Congress Party to fight the elections in cooperation with the Responsivists, as a separate organisation within the Congress. Thus the

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[55] Motilal Nehru, The Legislative Assembly, March 8, 1926. *The Legislative Assembly Debates* (Official Report, Vol. VII, Part III, p. 2143.

Swaraj Party was split into three factions—(1) the party headed by Motilal Nehru, (2) the Responsive Cooperation Party led by Jayakar, Kelkar and Moonje, and (3) the Independent Congress Party founded by Malaviya and Lajpat Rai.

In the elections which were held in November and December 1926, the disruption of the political forces was fully reflected. The Swaraj Party achieved creditable results only in the Madras Presidency where it routed the anti-Brahmin party. In Bengal it just maintained its position, in Bihar and Orissa the members returned stood on the Congress ticket but were Responsivist in attitude; in Bombay, the Central Provinces, U.P. and the Panjab they were routed.

The Swarajists did not do badly in the Imperial Legislative Assembly for they captured 40 seats out of 104 elected ones. But the complexion of the new Assembly was vastly different from that of the previous one. The Swarajists were balanced by their rivals, the Responsivists. The Independent Party of Jinnah had disappeared, and he sat aloof a lone figure. The Muslims were mostly communalists, and not allied with any nationalist group.

When the new Assembly met, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, read out his inaugural address on January 24, 1927. Dealing with the problem of constitutional advance he used minatory language. He said, "Those who are anxious to see constitutional advance must either coerce Parliament or convince it. I cannot emphasize too strongly that in this matter they are not likely to succeed in coercing Parliament, and that Parliament will resent any attempt to do so under whatever shape the attempt is made. Moreover, it must inevitably be gravely disquieted by language, which appears to be inspired by hostility not only to legitimate British interests, but also to the British connection."[56]

He held out a threat to the Swaraj Party in these words, "If it (Parliament) sees any large section of Indian opinion, however vocal in its desire to further the cause of Indian self-government, steadily adhering to the determination to do nothing but obstruct the machinery with which India has been entrusted, Parliament is more likely to see in this evidence that the application of western constitutional practice to India may be mistaken, than proof of the wisdom of immediate surrender to India of its own responsibility."[57]

Notwithstanding the angry mien of Government, the Assembly asserted itself and passed resolutions condemning the detention in Bengal without trial. Even though the Assembly consisted of the

[56] The Viceroy's Inaugural Address, Imperial Legislative Assembly, January 24, 1927. *Legislative Assembly Debates* (Official Report), (19th January to 21st February 1927), Vol. I, p. 47.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

crippled representatives of a paralysed people, it succeeded in carrying the cut to reduce the demand under the Executive Council to one rupee. The debate on the cut gave to the members an opportunity to discuss the question of constitutional reform. The Indian members—both Swarajist and Responsivist, pressed for expediting it, but the Government resisted and was defeated by 65 votes to 56.

The debate on the annual budget led to a lively exchange between the Government and the opposition which rejected the proposal to raise the salt tax. It was, however, restored by the Council of State.

During the months succeeding the adjournment of the Assembly the air was thick with rumours of the impending appointment of a Commission to enquire and report on the Reforms. On November 8, 1927, the Viceroy's announcement that the Government had decided to appoint a Parliamentary Commission of seven members of Parliament headed by Sir John Simon, set the speculation at rest.

India's reaction, as ought to have been foreseen, was totally hostile. That the British rulers did not do so, brings into lurid light the astonishing ignorance and lack of understanding of the British authorities in England and their agents in India of Indian opinion and sentiment. As the Simon Commission will be discussed in a subsequent section all that is necessary here is to draw attention to the discussion in the Assembly, on February 26, 1928.

Lajpat Rai initiated the debate by means of a resolution which ran as follows :

"This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council to convey to His Majesty's Government the Assembly's entire lack of confidence in the Parliamentary Commission which has been appointed to review the constitution of India."

In the ensuing debate Lajpat Rai declared that he had no faith in the bona fides of the Commission and the authorities who had appointed it. He did not believe that they were actuated by motives of justice or fair play, or by regard for the interests of India. He questioned not only their competence to deal adequately with the complex Indian problem, but also their moral right to do so, because the Commission was both jury and judge which violated the principles of justice.

Jayakar refused to recognise the constitutional propriety of appointing an all-white commission as arbiters of India's destiny. Jinnah wanted that Indians should have an equal status and equal authority in the matter of enquiry and in making recommendations concerning Reforms. As some Muslim members had welcomed the Commission, he told the Assembly : "There are those who want to reap a wonderful harvest for the Moslem community. I say to that : you have been

fooled, and you want to be fooled again; but I refuse to be fooled."[58]

Malaviya appealed to all Indians that the national honour was at stake, if they voted in favour of cooperation with the Commission.

On the resolution being put to vote, 68 voted against cooperation with the Simon Commission and 62 for. Thus the Assembly gave emphatic expression to its disapproval of the Commission.

Now that the enquiry and the proceedings of the Commission overshadowed all other activity, the interest in the proceedings of the legislature flagged. With the exception of the debates on the general and Railway budgets and the repressive measures of Government little happened to excite unusual attention.

Other factors also came into play, for outside the councils political temperature was fast rising. Distrust of Government was increasing as the statements of the Secretary of State and members of Parliament revealed the vast gulf between the apparently conciliatory assurances of the Viceroy and the actual intentions of the British ruling parties.

The divisions among the Indian political groups and communities and the manoeuvres of Government to utilize them against the demand of self-government aggravated doubts and accentuated uncertainties about the future.

The crisis was precipitated by the announcement of Irwin on October 31, 1929, (1) that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of Dominion Status, (2) that the Government intended to set up a conference consisting of the representatives both of British India and of the States for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament.

The announcement was considered by the Indian leaders and the Congress Working Committee, and they promised India's cooperation provided certain conditions were fulfilled and certain points clarified. In response to the urgent demands of English friends Gandhiji stated that he was "dying for cooperation".

However, the Viceroy's announcement was challenged in Parliament; it was stated on behalf of the Labour Government that it could not commit itself to India's attainment of Dominion Status without delay and at one stroke. Irwin, who had inspired great hopes by his announcement of October, dashed them to the ground in his interview on 23rd December with Gandhiji and other leaders by declaring that he was not in a position to extend an invitation to the Round Table

[58] M. A. Jinnah, speech in Legislative Assembly, February 16, 1928. *Legislative Assembly Debates* (Official Report), (1st February to 7th March 1928), Vol. I, p. 425.

Conference with any definite promise of Dominion Status. The bubble was burst, the double-dealing of the Government exposed and all doubts concerning its sincerity confirmed.

The inevitable followed. The Congress which met at Lahore in the last days of the month of December under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru adopted the resolution moved by Gandhiji which declared that Swaraj meaning complete independence was the goal of India, that in order to win the goal it was necessary to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement, that the Congress would not participate in the RTC and that the members of the Swaraj Party in the councils should immediately resign.

The resolution was given effect to by the members of the Legislative Assembly in January 1930. The chapter of non-cooperation from within was thus closed. Was the six years' experiment an exercise in futility as the no-changers wished to believe ? In order to answer this question it is necessary to understand the nature of the complex problem of Indian independence and the methods of its achievement.

The Implications of Independence Movement

As has been pointed out earlier, the movement for independence was not a simple question of transfer of political power from Britain to India. It implied a political transformation, based on social developments issuing from the introduction of processes of modern economic methods. It also involved a parallel change in the ways of thinking and in the appreciation of values.

Therefore two opposite tendencies were at work. On the one hand, the desire for liberation from the political domination of the West, on the other side the attraction of Western political, social, economic, scientific and technical conceptions and practices.

This dualism and conflict influenced the struggle for independence. Non-cooperation and civil disobedience were one aspect of it, non-violence another. If non-violent resistance represented the aggressive and militant character of the struggle, various degrees of non-violence—obstruction, responsive cooperation, constitutional protest and opposition represented the other.

In retrospect it appears that all four methods contributed to the achievement of the common aim—self-government.

The non-cooperative activity by Gandhiji produced the steam of the motive power which supplied the energy for pushing the nation's advance, the Swarajist obstruction directed the course on which the nation had to move, the Responsivists and the Liberals—between whom there was little difference, supplied the compass and the map which indicated the course and stages of advance.

From 1921 to 1930 the Liberals and the Swarajists endeavoured

to fulfil their self-imposed tasks. They had to contend against tremendous odds, entrenched imperialist forces confronted them. To all appearance they were invulnerable, for they commanded unlimited resources of a great empire. But after all, the utilisation of all these resources for any purpose depended upon the intellect and will of the men who employed them, and who had to deal with dedicated men in opposition to them.

For a long time the rulers had held unchallenged sway over India. But when at the beginning of the twentieth century the gauntlet was thrown down, their complacence was disturbed, and how to defeat the threat became a matter of deep concern. The Morley-Minto scheme was devised to divide and baffle the challengers, by conciliating the less intransigent and by suppressing the irreconcilable. Taking the preservation of the imperial interests as the paramount object the three-pronged policy of Morley-Minto became the set pattern of British policy in India. The Conservative, Liberal and Labour parties all agreed upon it, for they did not regard the Indian question as a party question, but a matter of national concern.

By their political experience, their democratic environment, Parliamentary training, however, the British ruling class was conditioned to pursue its aims in its own peculiar manner, which their method of government manifested; and which made the imperialism of Britain different from both the past and contemporary imperialisms. It tried hard not to obtrude its interests too blatantly upon its subjects. It threw a veil of illusion over its activities which not only attempted to disguise its real nature from its subjects, but led its agents to believe that they were actually promoting their good.

If then the mind of the Indian nationalists was tossed between two alternatives, and if it rejected the use of the universal method of violent resistance to overthrow foreign dominion, the rulers too could not pursue their interests by employing single-mindedly the weapon usually employed to impose the rulers' will upon their subjects, *viz.*, ruthless obsolete repression.

The impact of the two dualities upon each other shaped the history of these times. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms appeared hand in hand with the Rowlatt acts, so did the non-cooperation and Khilafat campaigns and the Liberal and the Swarajist cooperation in the councils. Then came the next round of civil disobedience in the form of Salt Satyagraha and the Round Table Conference and the new Reform Act.

At this stage it becomes necessary to assess the value of the Swarajist intervention and the causes which led to its cessation of council work. In 1921, Chelmsford retired and Reading, one of the front-rank public men of England, assumed office. He was highly

talented, shrewd and adroit and possessed of great diplomatic skill. He was self-assured and of balanced mind; when convinced of the correctness of a course, he was decisive and courageous. A liberal of the Lloyd Georgian hue, he was a stark conservative on the question of constitutional advance in India. His political aim was to please the Moderates who were admirers of the liberal principles and of the Liberal Party, and by their support to disconcert the plans of the Nationalists and defeat their aims.

The constitution which he was called upon to operate greatly increased the responsibilities and the difficulties of the Viceroy. He had to take decisions on a number of important matters at his personal discretion. In such matters he was legally independent of the control, direction and superintendence of the Secretary of State. These responsibilities and the increased complexities of a government of the dyarchic character had the effect of almost reversing the roles of the Secretary of State and the Governor-General, as is evident from the action of Morley, Crewe, Chamberlain and Montagu, who initiated the constitutional reforms and otherwise directed the Governors-General, Minto, Hardinge and Chelmsford. With Reading in India and Montagu, Peel, Olivier and Birkenhead in England the pendulum began to swing in the direction of India. The reason was that the Viceroys now came into direct contact with the Indian nationalist politicians, and naturally became acutely aware of the revolution of Indian public opinion. Hence they were obliged to press upon their chiefs in England the need for appropriate action. The Secretaries of State living 6,000 miles away, completely out of direct and personal touch with Indian politicians and the strength of Indian feelings, could not possibly retain the initiative, although they continued to exercise their legal right to decide.

The value of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, despite their inadequacy, was that the Indian political leaders obtained the opportunity to oblige the bureaucrats to explain and justify their decisions, to listen to the well-argued criticism of their policies and measures, and to suffer defeats in debate and voting at the hands of those for whom they had little respect. This was the disagreeable training which cured some of the prejudices and knocked out some of the preconceived notions of the ruling class, especially in its higher echelons.

For nearly a decade, 1921 to 1930, the Indian and the British minds clashed against one another. Whether the Indian members were Liberals or Swarajists, they had pressed the Government for the same objectives—economy in government expenditure, relief in the burden of taxation especially in the agricultural sector, protection and promotion of Indian industry, expansion of education, Indianization of civil and military services, abrogation of repressive laws, release of political

prisoners, and above all rapid advance towards responsible government.

They succeeded in some matters, e.g., a tariff board was established to give effect to the policy of protection, measures were initiated to increase the recruitment of Indians in the services, some of the repressive laws like the Press Act of 1910 were abolished, and although the Muddiman Committee examined the defects in the working of the Act of 1919, the date for its revision was not advanced, in spite of the assurance of Birkenhead that wise men were not slaves of dates.

But in other matters retrogade steps were taken despite Nationalist opposition. The British members of the Indian Civil Service regarded it derogatory to their dignity to serve under Indian masters, and what was worse, their future prospects were uncertain. The non-cooperation movement augmented their fears. Then the war had worsened the economic conditions and they were dissatisfied with the terms of their service. Because of these reasons it was found that the British youth of the right calibre were not forthcoming in sufficient numbers to join the civil services. Measures were, therefore, taken to induce the students in the British Universities to compete for the Indian Civil Service examinations. The Secretary of State had already appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Macdonnel, a member of the India Council, to enquire into the complaints of the services. The Governor-General had authorized the issue of the circular signed by O'Donnel of the Home Department to find out the opinions of the provincial governments on the question of Indianisation of services.

At this stage in order to boost the morale of the members of the services, Lloyd George, the then Prime Minister, made a statement in the House of Commons on August 2, 1922, in the course of which he drew attention to the uneasiness among British officers and consequently the desirability of assuring them. He pointed out that the recent Reforms were in the nature of an experiment and it remained to be seen whether it proved suitable to Indian conditions or not. He went on to say, "One thing we must make clear, that Britain will in no circumstances relinquish her responsibility in India. . . . We stand by our responsibilities. We will take whatever steps are necessary to discharge or to enforce them." He added : "We have invited the cooperation of the people of India in the discharge of this trust. . . . To discharge that great trust it is essential to have the aid of the Indian civil servants, Indian soldiers, Indian judges, and Indian legislators. But it is vital that we should have the continued assistance of British officials." He continued, "What I want especially to say is this, that whatever their (Indians') success, whether as Parliamentarians or as administrators, I can see no period when they can dispense with the guidance and assistance of a small number of British Civil Servants, of British officials in India. . . . They are the steel frame of the whole

structure. ... Therefore it is essential that we should keep this service."[59]

Lloyd George's assurance was translated into deeds by the recommendations of the Royal Commission presided over by Viscount Lee. The services were assured that they would continue to remain under the control of the Secretary of State, that their conditions and terms of appointment would be embodied in a contract binding on both the Government and the civil servant, that a Public Service Commission would be established with powers of recruitment and of hearing and deciding appeals of the servants against the decisions of the Government. The Lee Commission made generous recommendations regarding the pay and allowances, pensions and family pensions, passages and provident fund.

The Lee Commission concessions cost the Indian exchequer at least Rs. 1.25 crores a year eventually. The Indian members' protests against lloyd George's steel frame and the Lee extravagance were of no avail.

On the Indianisation of services, the Lee Commission recommended that in the Indian Civil Service the maximum number should be fifty per cent Indian and fifty per cent European, which proportion could be reached after nearly 15 years.

In consequence of the retrograde measures and the non-transference of authority, Reading's judgement, "the true political arena in India had been transferred from meeting halls and mass rallies to the Legislatures set up by the 1919 Act,"[60] was not justified by subsequent events.

The resignation of the Swarajists from the Imperial Legislative Assembly brought the experiment of utilizing the legislatures to expedite the establishment of self-government at an early date to an end. They had realized from the very start that they could not offer continuous and unmitigated non-cooperation from within as their manifesto had announced, because they were not in a majority. But the tactics which they followed were not devoid of results. The most important of these was to convince the Government of India that the transfer of power on the Dominion model was not an issue which could be brushed aside as impracticable and unattainable within any conceivable time. As Malcolm Hailey, the Home Member, confessed to his discomfiture, the question had been raised and Dominion Status had been made a live issue. All future plans of reform henceforward had then to accept Dominion Status as the major premise of the problem.

The second valuable result was that it brought home to the rulers

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[59] *H. C. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 157, col. 1513.

[60] Reading, the Marquess of, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

the realization of the great Parliamentary ability of the Nationalist leaders and their organisational capacity for electioneering and offering opposition in Parliament. The success of the Swarajists to consolidate the forces of opposition revealed the basic weakness of the 1919 constitution. For it had created an irresponsible executive which, however, was confronted with a legislature in permanent opposition. It was neither the Presidential system of the U.S.A. where the rule of the head of the Executive was determined by the direct vote of the electorate; nor the Parliamentary system where the Prime Minister ruled with the support of the party in a majority in the House of Commons. It was quite clear that the illogical Indian system could only lead to deadlocks and eventually to a breakdown. Therefore it had to be changed—the earlier the better. But the British habit of evading inconvenient issues and muddling along kept it going, though it was allowed only a short life and a rather stormy life at that.

How difficult it was to work the system is unfolded in the correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. One of the early difficulties arose when there was a difference of opinion on an important issue between the two. To effect economy in military expenditure and to Indianize military services was the matter. But in regard to military services and economy the proposals of the Government of India did not meet with the approval of the Secretary of State. Reading complained to Montagu, "This does really make the position most difficult and my work is cut out to try to keep things smooth. . . . Here is now the situation which I have always seen coming and have dreaded, i.e., definite conflict between you at home and me out here. . . . Our members of Council (Executive) have to argue to the Assembly and put their case to them to try to persuade the legislature to accept our conclusions and to pass the taxation. . . . You see how difficult it is for the Finance Member or for the Army Member to stand up and merely record the decisions of the Home Government by announcing these as the decisions to which we have come. Is he to leave it at that, or is he to be entitled to say something more which will at least not only salve his own conscience but enable him to hold the confidence of the legislature ? . . . I see the serious menace to the Reforms of any statement which will indicate that my Government and the Government at Home are taking opposite views."[61]

What impression the Swarajist Party created on the Indian Government is related by Reading in a letter to Olivier in February 1924. He writes :

"For the present the Swarajist has it all his own way; there is none to withstand him; there is none to compare with him; there is none

[61] *Reading Papers* : Reading to Montagu, February 16, 1922.

to attack him; and he proceeds on his victorious march largely because of the full-blooded programme he puts before the electorate as a remedy for all their ills and a means of disposing of a tyrannical government. The Moderate presents a very dull and dreary appearance as compared with the Swarajist. His programme is drab and uninteresting to the electorate after listening to the highly coloured and fiery denunciation of the Swarajists."[62]

In April 1924, he poured his woes into the ears of his son. On being required to use his special powers of certification to restore the salt tax rejected by the Assembly, he wrote :

"I had to make the decision, which of course is very unpopular amongst Indians and involves me in much criticism and even attack. It is a curious position under the Act. The burden of deciding whether the occasion requires the exercise of the special powers overriding the vote of the Chamber is placed, not upon the Government of India, but upon the Viceroy. . . . My task has been, among other difficulties, to govern a Parliament in which there is always a large majority against the Government."[63]

Apparently the Government was greatly exercised over the success of the Swarajist Party in the election of 1923. Reading in a letter to Olivier analyzed the causes. According to him the chief cause was the defencelessness of Government at the elections. "The Swarajists had the better of their rivals because they had a superior organisation, ampler funds, and more effective propaganda."[64]

Reviewing the work in the second session of the Assembly in September 1925, Reading pointed out to Birkenhead the growing coolness between the Swarajists on the one side and the Nationalists and Independents on the other. He was sure that if they had maintained a united front it would have been difficult to resist the demand for appointing the Royal Commission earlier.

VI. Demand for Constitutional Revision

War has been a quickener of the British conscience in relation to India. From the War of American Independence to the Second World War in almost every one of them 'the door of the future fell mysteriously ajar', and Britain was shocked into the recognition of its duties and an examination of the dealings of its agents in India. Another stimulator of liberal sentiment has been the Indian unrest—incipient or manifest, passive or aggressive. The examples are the Revolt of

[62] Reading, Marquess of, *op. cit.*, p. 283.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 294.
[64] *Reading Papers*: Reading to Oliver, February 7, 1924.

1857 which led to the Act of 1861; the latent discontent culminating in the formation of the Indian National Congress with its importunate demands which evoked a chary response in the Act of 1892; the stormy agitation of 1905 sparked by the Partition of Bengal which Morley and Minto sought to quell by the Act of 1909, and lastly the powerful vigorous national movement which confronted the British Government with the Lucknow Pact of 1916 and subsequently burst into the non-cooperation movement of 1919, and which resulted in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919.

Unfortunately the generosity of spirit inspired by war never lasted long and the response to demands was always too late and too halting. This was the case with the Reforms of 1919. They provoked an adverse reaction from all Indian political parties—Liberals, Nationalists, Muslim Leaguers. They were pronounced inadequate, disappointing and unsatisfactory.

A malevolent fairy seemed to preside over their birth, which was accompanied with distressing events—the Rowlatt Acts which threatened to suppress all political activity, the sharp and bitter riposte of the Panjab against the contemptuous treatment of Indian opinion which exposed the province to the fire of British vengeance, the humiliation of the Turks and the derogation of the Caliphate which caused tremendous excitement among the Indian Muslims. Thus burning coals were heaped upon the plant of tender hope sprung by the British pledges during the course of the war.

In 1921, when the first legislatures under the Montagu-Chelmsford Act met, the largest and the most influential political party, *viz.*, the Congress, was absent, substantially reducing Indian representation in the councils. The Liberals who agreed with the Congress in the criticism of the Act, however, decided to fight the elections and a number of eminent members of the Party won seats in the legislatures. As was expected of them and as the terms of their pledges to their constituents demanded, they discharged their function as legislators and ministers with great ability and courage.

Thus in 1921 the situation was that the Moderates pressed the Government within the legislatures for an advance towards Swaraj, the Congress sought to create outside a situation which could only be met by transfer of power and which could not be met by the employment of force. It supplied urgency and force to the demand of the Moderates, and inducement to the Indian Government to draw the attention of the Home Government to the need for action.

From 1921 till the meeting of the Round Table Conference in 1930, this dual attack continued, with this difference that in 1923 the Swarajists replaced the Moderates in the legislatures.

It is necessary to consider the progress of this dual process.

Gandhiji was inclined to work the Reforms in December 1919. In March 1920 he made an announcement that he had accepted the presidentship of the All-India Home Rule League, supported by Tilak, although abandoned by Annie Besant. Tilak's attitude towards the Reforms was stated in the manifesto which he published in April 1920. He declared :

"The party (the Congress Democratic Party) organised by Tilak proposes to work the Montagu Reforms Act for all it is worth and for accelerating the grant of full Responsible Government, and for this purpose, it will without hesitation offer cooperation or resort to constitutional opposition, whichever may be expedient and best calculated to give effect to the popular will."[65]

But by July 1920, the Congress had started the non-cooperation movement which had three principal objectives—the rectification of the Panjab wrongs, the resuscitation of the Turkish Caliphate and the realization of Swaraj. Regarding Swaraj the Congress point of view was that immediate transfer of the substance of power was essential and the idea of advance by stages was unacceptable. Secondly, it was only right that the content of Swaraj should be determined by the people who would exercise power rather than by the British Parliament. The Moderates in the Legislative Assembly agreed in both these matters with the Congress, but they wanted to avoid strong language and laid stress upon the retention of connection with the British Empire, similar to that of the Dominions.

In the Simla session of the Assembly a resolution was moved on September 22, 1921, and accepted by the Government, asking the Governor-General in Council to move the Secretary of State for India in Council to take necessary steps for transference of full autonomy to the provinces and of all subjects except defence, foreign affairs and the political department to the central legislature.

Montagu urged by the Viceroy brought up the matter before the Cabinet which on February 13, 1922, discussed it. Both the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, and Montagu, the Secretary of State, refused to entertain any revision or modification of the Act of 1919. In the House of Commons on the following day they explained the policy of the Government. Montagu declared that further steps towards self-government would depend upon the Parliament becoming satisfied with the use made of the first instalment. Then addressing the non-cooperators he stated : "But if the existence of our Empire is challenged, if the discharge of the responsibilities of our government towards India is prevented, if demands are made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplate a retreat from India, then India will not

[65] Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, *The History of the Congress,* Vol. I, p. 328.

successfully challenge the most determined people in the world—a people who will once again, as it has done so recently, answer the challenge with all the vigour and determination at its command."[66] Lloyd George added, "Under no circumstances or conditions do we propose to withdraw from or impair, the full sovereignty of the King Emperor in India."[67]

About a month later Montagu resigned, in fact was dismissed, and Peel took over charge. On March 10, 1922, Gandhiji was arrested and eight days later sentenced to imprisonment for six years, with the result that the non-cooperation movement collapsed and the Khilafat agitation ended in futility. The challenge having failed, the Government pressed its advantage. On August 2, 1922, Lloyd George made his famous speech in the House of Commons to restore the shaken confidence of the bureaucracy in India and to boost the morale of the British in general. He told Parliament that the cardinal principle of the Liberal as well as all other Governments was, "that Britain will in no circumstances relinquish her responsibility in India..... We will take whatever steps are necessary to discharge or to enforce them (responsibilities)."[68]

He justified his stand in these words, "There is a great variety of races and creeds in India, probably greater variety than in the whole of Europe. There are innumerable divisive forces there, and if Britain withdrew her strong hand nothing would ensue except divisions, strife, conflict and anarchy."[69]

The speech caused an uproar in India. It was pointed out that the Prime Minister had gone back on the policy proclaimed in the announcement of August 20, 1917, and in the Preamble of the Act of 1919, and provided ample justification of the distrust of British promises.

Even Reading was constrained to write to the Secretary of State : "I confess that it is difficult, if you take the sentences relating to the Civil Service and its future in their literal meaning, to reconcile them with the latest declaration... and it is idle to deny that there are sentences and expressions in the speech which do lend themselves to the kind of criticism now directed to it."[70]

It is interesting to note that while Lloyd George and Montagu with their liberal principles were opposing further advance,

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[66] Mon gu, E. S., *H. C. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 150, col, 904, February 14, 1922.

[67] Lloyd George, D., *Ibid.*, col. 963.

[68] Lloyd Geo ge, D., *Ibid.*, Vol. 157, cols. 1509-10, August 2, 1922.

[69] *Ibid.*, col. 1510.

[70] *Reading Papers* : Reading to Peel, August 31, 1922.

Willingdon, the Governor of Madras, was writing to the Viceroy advocating full provincial autonomy for his province. Reading wrote to Peel that he considered such a step inopportune, although "it has been the cry of reformers ever since I have been here, and, indeed, it was one of the matters that struck me forcibly shortly after I arrived to find that almost at the beginning of the first session of the new legislature, demand should be made for so great an extension."[71]

Peel in his despatch of August 29, 1922, to the Government of India replied to the resolution of the Legislative Assembly passed nearly a year ago (September 22, 1921). He expressed surprise that members of the Assembly demanded as a result of only six months' experience a large extension of the Reforms of 1919. He gave three reasons why he was not prepared to examine the demand, much less to consider it worthy of presentation to Parliament.

The Labour Party and Reforms

In January 1924, the Labour Party came into office, but as it did not possess a majority in the House of Commons, it had to depend upon the support of the Liberals to function as government. Ramsay MacDonald became the Prime Minister and Lord Olivier the Secretary of State for India. In the political circles in India the advent of the Labour Government was hailed with delight. Hopes rose high, for the Labour Party appeared committed to self-government for India.

In 1918 on the occasion of the General Elections, the Party stated its policy in "Labour and the New Social Order" thus, "Freedom for Ireland and India it claims as democratic rights, and it will extend to all subject peoples the right of self-determination within the British Commonwealth of Free Nations."

In the annual conference of the Party the principle of self-determination was reiterated. In 1920, a resolution was moved and carried with the whole assembly standing to demand the application of this principle to India in particular. In 1920, the conference urged the Party in Parliament to support any further legislation "in the direction of securing to the people of India the same measure of self-government which is in operation in Canada, Australia and South Africa". The programme of the Party for the General Elections of 1923 included "the recognition of the real independence of Egypt and self-government for India."

Individual Labour leaders like Lansbury, Brockway, Ben Spoor, Wedgwood, had supported the Indian demand for responsible self-government in and outside Parliament. On June 27, 1923, Ramsay

[71] *Ibid.*, Reading to Peel, July 13, 1922.

MacDonald presiding over a meeting held at the Queen's Hall in London said :

"I think, most of us who have liberal minds, must accept as the essential condition of Imperial unity, namely, the recognition of Dominion Status for the great national elements of the Empire itself." He added, "We will say to the Indians : your country is yours, your Government is yours. And we shall seek your justification not in your continued subjection to us, but in your own capacity for Self-Rule and Self-Government." Addressing those who wavered he declared, "I believe some of them are not quite sure now but think we went too far, believe that in the hearts of a good many of them there is a feeling that the promise was a bad promise. Very well. If it was bad, you can go back upon it, but do remember this that if we do go back upon our promise, we can only do it at the expense of our own good name."[72]

After assuming office the tune changed. The accepted maxim of British politics that the Indian question was not a party question but a matter of national policy guided the Labour Government, as Reading told the Assembly on January 31, 1924, "It is the policy of the British nation and not of any party." All the old well-worn arguments were trotted out by the Labour spokesmen in Parliament. The claim of the Congress that its demand embodied the national will was denied. The Congress was declared a Hindu organisation. Coatman, the editor of *India,* the official annual publication of the Government of India, writes :

The Congress Party "is in fact, almost entirely a Hindu party, and from its beginning in the middle eighties has never been anything but predominantly Hindu... Outside India the belief is widely current that Congress is a democratic party. This is literally the exact reverse of the truth. The Congress Party is pre-eminently the party of privilege and vested interest. The success of the Congress Party's agitation would mean the replacement of British rule by the rule of a theocratic and plutocratic oligarchy. Further, the Congress Party adopted some, and anticipated other features of the characteristic technique of Fascism."[73]

According to Irwin Gandhiji represented Hindu India alone. In the Massey Lecture delivered at the Toronto University in 1932, he said : "And for Hindu India, so far as any man can personify a movement so many-sided, Mr. Gandhi, blend of mystic and politician,

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[72] Ramsay MacDonald's Queen's Hall Speech. *Indian Quarterly Register,* January-March 1924, Vol. I, pp. 268-69.

[73] Coatman, J., *Years of Destiny : India 1926-32,* pp. 86-87.

has long stood as the symbol of the struggle for national autonomy. He appeals to deep forces in Hinduism of which we know nothing."[74]

Olivier repeated another of the same class of reasons in his first statement as the Secretary of State for India in the House of Lords. According to him no progress towards Home Rule could take place "unless Parliamentary system is welded together by predominant common interests from its foundation in the electorate upwards".[75] He saw "no sign of this welding together; on the other hand, merely exacerbated mutual intolerance and antagonism" between the Hindus and Muslims; and a small enfranchised class of Hindus maintaining their position and distinction over outcaste masses.

On these grounds the claim of the Congress to demand self-government for India was rejected, for neither the masses, nor the depressed classes, nor the Muslims who all together formed the vast majority of the Indian people were represented by the Congress. There were other interests too—the Indian States, the landlords, etc.; who did not owe allegiance to the Congress.

It followed that only an extremely small, though vociferous, group of Hindu educated class was presuming to speak on behalf of the whole of India.

From the premise that the Indian National Congress was out of count on the question of self-government, it logically followed that the only body which could give a decision on the matter was the British Parliament. And this was clearly and specifically provided in the Act of 1919.

At the same time that the Labour Party formed the Government in England, the fortunes of election favoured the Swaraj Party and it was returned as the strongest single group in the Legislative Assembly, as well as in most of the provinces, and in Bengal and the Central Provinces it commanded the majority.

The result of these developments in England and India was that a dialogue—at long range and through the medium of third parties, the Parliament in England and the Assembly in India, started. The Government in Britain demanded cooperation from the Congress in working the Reforms and insisted upon the right of the Parliament to determine the content, the speed and the stages of advance towards responsible government.

The Indian Nationalists contended that it was not possible to make use of a fake political machine. All that could be done with it was

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[74] *Indian Problems,* Speeches by Lord Irwin, p. 364.

[75] The House of Lords, February 26, 1924, Lord Olivier's statement on Labour Government's Indian Policy. *H. L. Debates,* 5th Series, Vol. 56, col. 334.

to demonstrate its uselessness. The Swarajist Party, therefore, went into the councils to show that the Act of 1919 was unworkable and that its transference of power in the provinces only make-believe, unreal.

To the Nationalists the view that the Parliament should be regarded as the sole arbiter of India's destiny appeared outrageous. How could a body of politicians—even though aided by their agents in India, and their commissions of enquiry, ignorant of Indian aspirations, Indian ways of living and thinking, Indian traditions, customs, religions, arrogate to themselves the authority to lay down the fundamental laws under which Indians were to live and work in future, passed beyond their understanding.

In the very first session of the Legislative Assembly it was seen that the debates were hollow, and the votes of the majority utterly ineffective—a flagrant negation of democratic procedure. This was confirmed again and again in the succeeding sessions and years. No other result was possible with an irresponsible executive and a partially elected legislature.

On the 5th of February 1924, Rangachariar moved a resolution in the Assembly urging the revision of the Government of India Act of 1919, which was amended by Motilal Nehru to read as follows:

"This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council to take steps to have the Government of India Act revised with a view to establish full Responsible Government in India."

The steps recommended were: that a representative Round Table Conference be summoned to prepare the scheme of a constitution for India, that the scheme should be placed before a newly elected Indian legislature and then submitted to the British Parliament for enactment.

The Government of India through the Home Member, Malcolm Hailey, informed the Assembly that no change in the constitution was possible so long as the problems of defence, the Indian States, the Hindu-Muslim differences and social barriers remained unsolved. His final word was, "No British Government, however constituted, would make any recommendation to British Parliament for immediate responsibility and the British Parliament will not agree to such a proposal."[76]

He announced that all that the Government was prepared to do was to investigate complaints against the present scheme of Government and the difficulties and defects in its actual working by means

[76] Sir Malcolm Hailey, Legislative Assembly debate on demand for Self-Government, dated February 8, 1924. *The Indian Quarterly Register*, January-March 1924, Vol. I, No. I, p. 133.

of a departmental committee of enquiry. The debate on the amendment concluded on February 13, and the motion was put to vote. The House divided and carried the amendment by 76 votes to 48.

The nationalists, consisting of the Swarajists, Independents and other members with a similar outlook who had voted for Motilal Nehru's amendment, were naturally greatly annoyed at the refusal of the Government to accept the decision of the Assembly. They took their revenge when voting for the Budget and the Finance Bill took place. Demand after demand was rejected, the consideration of the Finance Bill was refused and when the Bill with some modifications was brought back with the Viceroy's recommendation, the motion for introduction was again rejected.

But the Government treated the votes with contempt and restored the demands and the proposals in the Finance Bill. How scornful the Government was of the conduct of the Assembly appears from Reading's opinion on Jinnah's motive in supporting the Swaraj Party. He wrote to his son in March 1924 :

"Jinnah evidently thought that by the terms of the alliance (between his Independents and the Swarajists) he would be sitting in the driving seat of the motor car holding the steering-wheel with Motilal Nehru beside him, powerless to control except by means of advice."[77]

He even stated that suggestions were made on behalf of Jinnah to enable him to retrace his steps and retreat from his commitments. But Reading did not oblige.

However, the victory of the Nationalists over the Government was empty. It gave undoubtedly some satisfaction to their indignant hearts because the national claim was vindicated and the sham character of the reforms exposed. No doubt now remained that there would be no modification in the irresponsible nature of the Executive and of the helplessness of the legislature.

But it was not possible for the Government to maintain an adamantly negative attitude. The Viceroy felt it necessary to consult the provincial governors and issued a circular letter inviting their views on the question of Reforms, and ultimately set up the Muddiman Committee to go into the problem of the working of the Reforms.

Meanwhile deputations of Indians on behalf of the Indian National Convention consisting of such eminent persons as Srinivasa Sastri and Annie Besant and prominent politicians like Rangachariar and Ali Imam visited England, interviewed the Secretary of State, talked to the members of Parliament and held meetings to explain India's demand for Swaraj. Some members of the Labour Party pressed India's case in Parliament by interpellations and resolutions.

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[77] Reading, the Marquess of, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

Interesting as the questions of the members and the replies of the Under Secretary of State on behalf of the Government were, the debate in the House of Commons on April 15, 1924, raised by a member of the Conservative Party, was revealing, for it made clear the position of the British parties relating to the Indian question. All parties agreed that no immediate political advance could be contemplated. The differences between them were more or less verbal and hardly substantial. They referred to administrative policies and measures but scarcely touched on the basic question of political reform. The Conservatives breathed fire and sword and advocated a policy of ruthless repression. According to them, the Indian National Congress was an organisation of the enemies of the British Empire, the Swarajists were obstreperous opponents of the Government and Gandhi a rebel. The Liberals deplored the failure of dyarchy and desired to investigate the causes. The spokesman of the Labour Government was polite and courteous but firm in the matter of the revision of the Act of 1919.

During the Labour regime the reforms were discussed for the last time on July 31, 1924, in the House of Lords. There was a great deal of logic chopping whether the 1919 Act had succeeded or failed. The Conservatives led by Curzon were in full cry. They pointed to the breakdown in the centre, the provinces and Bengal to prove the failure of the reforms scheme. Olivier and Chelmsford, on behalf of the Labour Party, argued that dyarchy had not, in spite of the obstructionists, brought the Government to a standstill.

But whatever the public asseverations of the Labour statesmen, they were determined not to yield to the Indian demand for immediate advance towards self-government or for accelerating the appointment of the Commission to revise the Act of 1919, before the period of ten years. Thus they were in substantial agreement with the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Reading, however, was much harassed by the persistence of Swarajist demands. So he reported to Olivier that the Government of India was agreeable to the appointment of the Reform Enquiry Committee, but wanted that it should lead to the despatch from England of a Statutory Commission to consider the revision of the constitution. The Secretary of State refused to countenance such a move, because the Government was not in favour of radical changes in India.[78]

Reading who realized that Indians of all shades of opinion, barring a few exceptions, were suspicious of British intentions and full of mistrust of Government, again pressed for an early appointment of a

[78] *Reading Papers,* Olivier to Reading, March 27, 1924.

Statutory Commission. He did not think that this would be considered as an admission of the unworkability of the 1919 constitution. In his view the only chance of uniting the Independents (Jinnah group) and the Moderates, and to defeat the Swarajists, was to indicate that Government was not determined to standstill till 1929.[79] On May 15, 1924, Olivier brusquely told the Viceroy that he was not prepared to appoint any commission—statutory or parliamentary.[80]

The Conservatives and Reforms

In November the Labour Government resigned and in the elections which took place the tables were turned, and the Conservatives were returned to Parliament in an overwhelming majority. Baldwin became the Prime Minister and Birkenhead, an able but reactionary politician who had played a somewhat compromising role in the Irish Home Rule agitation and earned the sobriquet 'Galloper Smith' for the gallant support he gave to the Protestants of Ulster, the Secretary of State for India.

Birkenhead's opinion regarding Indian reforms was communicated to Reading in the letter of December 4, 1924. He wrote, "I think you know that alone in the Cabinet I distrusted and indeed to some extent opposed the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. To me it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government. My present view is that we ought rigidly to adhere to the dates proposed in the Act for a reconsideration of the situation."[81]

In January 1925 the ex-Secretary of State, Olivier, contributed four articles to the *Statesman* (England). He reiterated his previous opinion expressed in Parliament, *viz.*, "It is not physically possible, even if you yourselves are prepared to recommend it (which you are not), suddenly and immediately to substitute a completely democratic constitution suitable to a self-governing Dominion."[82]

In July 1925, Birkenhead explained the policy of the Government in respect of India, in the House of Lords. He declared, "We shall not be diverted from its (the Act of 1919) high obligations by tactics of restless impatience. The door to acceleration is not open to menace. Still less will it be stormed by violence." Having delivered this threat, the Secretary of State went on to say, "Wise men are not slaves of dates. Rather are dates the servants of sagacious men."

Then, in order to justify his unwillingness to move forward, he trotted out the old familiar arguments : "To talk of India as an entity

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[79] *Ibid.*, Reading to Olivier, April 17, 1924.
[80] *Ibid.*, Olivier to Reading, May 15, 1924.
[81] The Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax*, p. 206.
[82] *Indian Quarterly Register*, January to June 1925, Vol. I, p. 298.

is as absurd as to talk of Europe as an entity.... There never has been such a nation. Whether there ever will be such a nation the future alone can show."[83]

While the Secretary of State was showing in the public a brave resolve of his Government not to submit to the tactics of the Indian Nationalists in and out of the councils, he was making shrewd efforts by cajolery and threat to induce the Congress to give up its non-cooperative attitude, to accept the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and show its willingness to abide by the decision of the British Parliament. On March 31, in the debate on the Bengal Ordinance, Birkenhead invited C.R. Das "to go forward and cooperate with Government in repressing the violence he deprecates". Das gave his reply to the invitation in these words :

"I entirely agree with him (Birkenhead) that never will freedom be reached by violence.... But I invite the Government to ask itself the question : whence arises the zeal for lawlessness in Bengal?" Then he went on to invite Birkenhead to investigate the causes of revolutionary activity in India and undertake a radical and permanent cure. He assured the Secretary of State that the revolutionary movement would disappear the moment "the foundation of our freedom is laid by the Government", and suggested "there should be a distinct and authoritative declaration by the Government at the earliest possible opportunity."[84]

On May 2, in his presidential address to the Provincial Conference at Faridpur he declared : "If I am satisfied that the present Act has transferred any real responsibility to the people,—that there is opportunity for self-realization, self-development and self-fulfilment under the Act I would unhesitatingly cooperate with the Government and begin the constructive work within the Council Chamber."

He made then this offer : "In the first place, the Government should divest itself of its wide discretionary powers of constraint, and follow it up by proclaiming a general amnesty of all political prisoners. In the next place, the Government should guarantee to us the fullest recognition of our right to the establishment of Swaraj within the Commonwealth, in the near future, and that in the meantime till Swaraj comes a sure and sufficient foundation of such Swaraj should be laid at once.... I believe that with a change of heart on the part of the Government, there is bound to be produced a change in the mental outlook of the revolutionary."

And he then made the following appeal :

[83] The House of Lords—debate on the British Government's Indian Policy, July 7, 1925. *H. L. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 61, col. 1078.

[84] *The Indian Quarterly Register*, January to June 1925, pp. 88a & 88b.

"Will British statesmen rise to the occasion? To them I say, you can have peace today on terms that are honourable both to you and to us."[85]

From March to August 1925, Reading had stayed in England to discuss the Indian problem with the Home Government. The speech of Birkenhead in the House of Lords in July 1925 was made after consultations with Reading.

On his return from England, Reading in opening the Simla session of the Assembly on August 20, 1925, endorsed Birkenhead's appeal. In order to encourage the Responsivists he gave the assurance, "We desire and request goodwill, nor shall we be niggardly bargainers if we meet with that generous friendship which is near and dear to our hearts."[86]

But at the same time he warned the Nationalists: "I know there is a school of thought in India which preaches incessantly that nothing is to be won from England save by force or threats. Believe me, that is a profound mistake and if persisted in, cannot but embitter the relations of the two countries."

Reading's son notes, "Certain it is that the cracks in the Congress Party developed more rapidly than ever."[87]

Reading himself wrote to Birkenhead, "There is more desire to cooperate, and not only is there desire but there has actually been more cooperation throughout the session."[88]

Meanwhile the Muddiman Committee had finished the enquiry and submitted its findings and recommendations.

In his anxiety to prevent the Congress Party from increasing its Reading thought of a counter-stroke which would solidify and hearten all the various anti-Congress elements in the country and spike the Swarajist guns before the election of 1926, by appointing the Statutory Commission in 1927 instead of 1929. He wrote:

"The appeal of such an announcement will give the Liberals and Independents the advantage of having by their policy succeeded in obtaining a substantial measure of political advantage.... It would embarass the Swarajists,.... and it would create a more favourable atmosphere for my successor."[89]

He insisted that the decision should be taken immediately, for "otherwise the Swarajists will table a Resolution (in the spring of 1926) based upon that of September last, and when this has been

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[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 387-95.

[86] Reading, the Marquess of, *op. cit.*, p. 541.

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 542.

placed on the table, any subsequent announcement of Government policy will be hailed by the Swarajists as a victory for their tactics and they will go to the polls with the claim that they had forced the Government to this action."[90]

Birkenhead wrote back on September 10, that "it might be possible to accelerate the Commission because he was clear in his mind that its appointment should not be left to the Labour Government." "It was necessary," he said, "as a matter of elementary prudence to appoint the Commission by the summer of 1927." He realised that this was no concession to Indian opinion, "but must be used as such to get the best possible terms from them in return. He would use this as a bargain counter for disintegrating the Swarajist party which was already torn by divided counsels."[91]

He was, however, opposed to an immediate announcement as asked by Reading because in the prevailing state of public opinion in England such a statement would shock both the supporters of Government and others.[92]

Birkenhead had realized the need of appointing the Statutory Commission earlier than the date prescribed by the Reforms Act of 1919. But he was unable to make up his mind when to make the announcement. On the one hand, he wanted to avoid delay lest the Labour Party, which was expected to come into office at the end of the present term of Parliament, should select such members as might join the Indian leaders in their demands and draft a radical report. On the other hand, he had supreme contempt for the Indian National Congress which he refused to accept as representative of the Indian masses and whose influence he desired to destroy. He did not wish that the credit for antedating the appointment of the Commission should accrue to the Nationalists.

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90 *Ibid.*

91 *Reading Papers*: Birkenhead to Reading, December 10, 1925.

92 *Ibid.*, January 20, 1926.

CHAPTER TWO

IRWIN AND THE INDIAN PROBLEM

With the retirement of Reading and the installation of the blue-blooded Tory, Irwin, on the viceregal throne the aspect improved. Irwin enjoyed the reputation of being an earnest religious-minded and a genuinely conscientious man. He was sincere, fair and courteous. Gandhiji held him in high esteem when in later years he came in contact with him.

But while giving him credit for his virtues and conceding that such qualities as he possessed were not common among politicians, it must not be forgotten that Irwin could not rise above the deeply rooted beliefs and biases of his class. On the unfitness of India for responsible government because of Hindu-Muslim differences and diversities of culture, race, language, etc., on the dependence of political advance on the unreserved acceptance of British schemes and whole-hearted cooperation on Government terms, on the recognition of British Parliament's right to prescribe the speed, stages, nature of the advance and to hold enquiries about India's fitness for each instalment of reforms, Irwin's views were identical with those of all other leading members of the British political parties.

He was aware of the difficulty of striking a balance between the aspirations of India and the unwillingness of Britain to move quickly in that direction. He wrote to Birkenhead, "At some point or other a clash between what even moderate Indian political leaders feel bound to demand and what the majority of British opinion would feel able to give is inevitable. . . . At bottom I think that political India of nearly all shades of thought is more and more tending under extremist pressure to revolt against the claim of the British people to judge the rate of Indian progress."[1]

It was the duty of the Viceroy to take all necessary measures for protecting the interests of Britain. As Irwin regarded the intelligentsia not representative of India, lacking in political sense, irrational and irresponsible,[2] he was bound to place his trust first in the Muslim minority, ninety-nine per cent of whom were bitterly opposed to the Nehru proposals of self-government; then in the non-Brahmin classes who had formed the Justice Party in Madras; then the Depressed Classes; and last but not least the Indian States.

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[1] *Irwin Papers*: Irwin to Birkenhead, November 16, 1927.

[2] *Ibid.* Irwin to King George, Vol. I, dated November 29, 1927, February 29, 1928, etc.

Under the Act of 1919, the Viceroy's personal responsibilities had considerably increased because he was required to take immediate decisions without reference to the Secretary of State, for instance, in the certification of measures thrown out by the legislature. The confrontation in the legislature with a well-organised opposition and the rapid growth of political consciousness in the country were shifting the centre of gravity towards India.

It fell to Irwin's lot to captain the team which engaged in the political tug of war against the opposite party. He arrived in India at a time when the prospect was none too bright. The people were in a restless mood. The country was becoming impatient, terrorism was again showing its ominous face and Government had given to the Executive vast powers under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance of 1925 which threatened to deprive innocent people of the protection of law.

Economic problems insisted upon solution which appeared beyond the reach of Government; for instance, the rise in prices and the widening gulf between the prices of the raw materials produced by India and the prices of manufactured goods imported in the country, the spurt in the growth of population between 1921 and 1931, and the increase in the number of landless labourers. To which may be added the growing pressure upon land as a result of stagnation of industry and the enhancing burden of rural indebtedness.

The worsening of relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities was a phenomenon which was recognised even by the British rulers as more political than religious and which Indians firmly believed was the result of Government's acts of omission and commission—equally stoutly denied by the Government spokesmen, aggravated the anxieties and apprehensions of Indian public men. The Nationalist Party in the legislatures was greatly worried by the schisms which tended to break up its solidarity and weaken the opposition to the bureaucratic government.

Owing to all these circumstances the Swaraj Party in the Assembly was feeling sorely disappointed. It had entered the legislature to bring Swaraj nearer. But its efforts had been rendered nugatory by Government. The Assembly had accepted the resolution for expediting the revision of the constitution in 1924. Government turned a deaf ear to the demand. In September 1925 Motilal Nehru had moved the rejection of the majority report of the Muddiman Committee and recommended to the Governor-General in Council that necessary steps should be taken to constitute a Round Table Conference to draw up a scheme of self-government. The Assembly adopted the motion of the leader of the Swaraj Party, but the Government rejected it. It was

clear and utterly disappointing to the Swarajists that the Government had little respect for the Assembly.

Inevitably, the frustration found vent in the walk-out of the Swaraj Party from the Assembly in March 1926. For Irwin who assumed charge in April immediately after the withdrawal it was not a very auspicious start. Apart from the sombre appearance of the political scene, the country was in the grip of hatred and violence between the communities. The riots in Calcutta had taken a heavy toll of human life and resulted in atrocious deeds—desecration of places of worship, burning and looting.

In the circumstances the Viceroy felt it his duty to appeal to the communities to end the fratricidal war in the name of national life and religion.[3] He warned of the deplorable consequences of the dissensions to the political progress of the country. In his speech to the Assembly a month later he reminded them, "The antagonism" which was displayed by the communities, "appears to some extent to be based, not so much on traditional loyalty to any creed, as on new assertions of abstract rights which it is sought to invest with the sanctity of ancient principles."[4]

Birkenhead was of the same opinion. He too felt inclined to think that the Reforms were to some extent responsible for the recrudescence of strife. He wrote, "The moment the idea gains ground in India that one day there is to be self-government, the Moslems at once ask themselves where they come in upon such a readjustment, having regard to their numerical inferiority, and apprehension deepens into agitation from which, in India, violence is so easily begotten."[5]

I. Appointment of the Statutory Commission

It was obvious that a problem which was essentially political could not be amenable to remedies like religious and ethical sermons in which Irwin and Gandhiji indulged or appeals to patriotism and good sense, or warnings of evil consequences. The new assertions of political rights could only be satisfied by political action of the right kind. Morley-Minto and Montagu-Chelmsford by their decisions in total disregard of principles had injected the poison of separate communal representation in the body politic. Irwin, in his turn, while he admitted that "the time may come, and I greatly hope it will, when with general

[3] Lord Irwin, *Indian Problems*: Speech at the Chelmsford Club, July 17, 1926, pp. 230-40.

[4] *Ibid.* Speech to the Joint Meeting of the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, August 17, 1926, p. 29.

[5] *Irwin Papers*: Birkenhead to the Viceroy, July 8, 1926.

consent the necessity for such special representation will be no longer felt,"[6] refused to face the problem squarely. He absolved the Government by putting forward the excuse, "it is dangerous misreading of the position to suggest that the first responsibility lies on the Government", and transferred it to the shoulders of the people, "it is surely certain that the remedy for these things must grow from within and cannot be imposed from without."[7]

But Irwin could not ignore 'the inevitable and ever rising claims of Indian nationalism'. His contacts with the Indian leaders of different schools convinced him "that there had grown a passionate determination among the politically minded classes of all Indian races and religions to assert and uphold the claim of India to her due place in the world, and that it would be a profound mistake to allow geographical dimensions, or complications of religion, caste, and language to obscure its significance."[8]

The elections of winter 1926 confirmed Irwin in his views. For, in spite of communal dissensions and factionalism within the Congress, and contrary to the expectations and hopes of Birkenhead and Reading, the Congress Party was returned to the Assembly somewhat reduced in numbers but forming the largest single group. In fact, the nationally minded members of the Assembly who were divided on certain questions of policy were all agreed on the demand for an immediate advance in India's political status. In any case, the Government could not hope for an easy time in the proceedings. This was a compelling consideration for a speedy decision on starting the work of the Statutory Commission.

Birkenhead and Reading had already settled that the appointment of the Commission ought not to be delayed beyond 1927. Reading was induced to make this decision as a result of his experience in the Assembly and observance of the currents of opinion in the country. Birkenhead's conclusion was based on considerations of party expediency. The year of the Commission having been settled, the question of its composition had to be considered. Irwin was decidedly opposed to the inclusion of any Indian and considered it wise to create the Commission of an outside impartial body.[9]

Birkenhead wrote back to say, "As to the personnel of the Statutory Commission you have persuaded me of the wisdom of your view. I, too, now think that the advantages of having Indians on the Commission are outweighed by the disadvantages."

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[6] Lord Irwin, *Indian Problems*: Speech at the Chelmsford Club, July 17, 1926, p. 236.

[7] *Irwin Papers*: Irwin to Birkenhead, June 9, 1926.

[8] The Early of Birkenhead—*The Life of Lord Halifax*, p. 219.

[9] *Irwin Papers*: *Irwin* to Birkenhead, August 19, 1926.

He then reiterated his opinion that there ought to be no delay in selecting the members, for an election might either interrupt the plans or give opportunity for "some monkeying trials with our selection".[10]

Irwin then suggested that the choice of personnel ought to be confined to the members of Parliament only.[11] He argued, "Such a course, too, would have the advantage of affording the best defence that occurs to me for not putting Indians on the Commission."[12]

The matter was referred to the Cabinet which on July 20, 1927, resolved, (1) that the Commission should be composed of seven members of Parliament and consisting of four members of the Government supporters (the Conservative Party), one Liberal and two members of the Labour Party;

(2) That no Indian representative should be included in the Commission, but means of association of Indians with the Commission to assist as assessors in the examination of witnesses and to deliberate with the members of the Commission, but without helping to shape its report, should be found;

(3) That opportunity should be given to a select committee of the Indian Legislature to deliberate with the Commission after the report was completed, or with the Select Committee of Parliament on a bill prepared after the presentation of the report.

The Labour Party objected to the procedure in the third clause, and the Cabinet agreed to amend it. According to the amended clause, the Committee of the Indian Legislature was given an equal status to the Parliamentary Commission and its report would be in due course presented to the Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament.

Birkenhead now proceeded to select the members of the Commission. Sir John Simon, an eminent constitutional lawyer and a prominent member of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, who had recently played a marked role in the General Strike of 1926 and who was expected to be acceptable to the Moderates of India, was appointed Chairman. Burnham whose main qualification was that he had travelled to all parts of the British Empire, and Strathcona, the young holder of a party post, were chosen from the House of Lords. Lane-Fox who was the brother-in-law of Irwin and Cadogan, sometime Secretary of the Speaker, and both back-benchers of the Conservative Party in the Commons, represented the Party on the Commission. The then unknown Attlee and Vernon Hartshorn were the nominees of the Labour Party. This "exceptionally intelligent jury" of seven members of Parliament was expected to advise the Parliament on the problem

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[10] *Ibid.*, Birkenhead to Irwin, September 26, 1926.
[11] *Ibid.*, Irwin to Birkenhead, November 17, 1926.
[12] *Ibid.*, Irwin to Birkenhead, January 6, 1927.

extremely complicated and historically of world importance. According to Olivier, "the list seemed to him likely to be disappointing to most Indians who would consider it not of a sufficient calibre."[13]

The *Times* called them "second flight" men. It is astonishing that the British rulers of India believed that the destiny of the Empire could be safely entrusted to the hands of such men. It did not, however, take them long to realize their mistake. But then it was too late.

While Birkenhead was considering the names of the members of the Commission, doubts, which had been laid at rest, began to assail the minds of Birkenhead and Irwin. Birkenhead was arguing in March "whether a constitution for India could be settled by a Commission which contained no Indian member and whether such a course would not make it evident to all the world the inferiority complex with which we chose to brand the peoples of India".[14] In May he happened to discuss the matter with Vithalbhai Patel, Chairman of the Legislative Assembly, who was then visiting England. Patel's reaction to the appointment of a purely English commission was one of genuine alarm; "he told the Secretary of State that a Commission so formed might, on its visit to India, be absolutely boycotted".[15] Birkenhead had never thought of this, and asked Irwin what was his opinion. Irwin stuck to his view which he had expressed before in his letter of May 26, 1927, and assured Birkenhead that he would be able "to break the boycott of 'the Hindu Congress' with the help of the Muslims, the Liberals and the Indian States".

In August, he informed Birkenhead that the Home Member of his Executive Council, Hailey, was succeeding in his efforts to reconcile the Muslims to the idea of a Parliamentary Commission, but it was necessary to tackle S. P. Sinha in London in order to rally the Moderates.[16] The States, of course, could be easily managed.

So far as the Muslims were concerned there was additional reason to be hopeful about them. The Conference held at Simla in September to bring about rapprochement between the Hindus and the Muslims had failed and Irwin was expecting that the Muslims would soon turn to him to realize their objective. He had written to the Secretary of State, "They (the Muslims) are, after all, our best friends, and however impartial it may be our duty to be, we are not called upon, as I see it, to throw over our friends for new allies whose friendship has been a very uncertain quantity."[17] He was almost certain that the Muslims would not boycott and this would necessarily affect the decision of the Hindus.

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[13] The House of Lords, November 24, 1927. *The Indian Annual Register, 1927*, Vol. II, p. 76.

[14] *Irwin Papers*, Birkenhead to Irwin, March 23, 1927.

[15] *Ibid.*, Birkenhead to Irwin, May 5, 1927.

[16] *Ibid.*, Irwin to Birkenhead, August 18, 1927.

[17] *Ibid.*, Irwin to Birkenhead, April 3, 1927.

He wanted to try and persuade the Congress too, and therefore arranged talks with Gandhiji, Patel, Ansari and Iyengar. About Gandhiji he wrote to his father, "Of course his political position is that England and the English Parliament have no moral claim to be the judges of Indian progress. . . . What they ought to do is, as in the case of Ireland, to recognise that India should be accorded Dominion Status, and then to meet Indians and discuss the precise methods and the details by which and through which this could be accomplished."[18]

What the other three told him ought to have given him a pause. But prepossessions, indifference towards Indian opinion and confidence born of ignorance of the feelings of the Indian people were the evil counsellors of those who held the reins of office in India.

Unshaken himself, he overcame the hesitation of Birkenhead who was otherwise not too much enamoured of the 'Congress chatterers'. Thus on November 8, 1927, the Secretary of State in England and the Viceroy in India announced the appointment of the Statutory Commission on reforms.

II. Indian Indignation

In India, before the formal announcement was made, the coming events had begun to cast their shadow. Indian leaders like Sapru and Motilal Nehru had been in England when the composition of the Commission was being discussed or was decided. They were greatly perturbed by the information they received. As they communicated their apprehensions to their colleagues a tense atmosphere was built up. On the announcement of the 8th November the storm broke and all India was enveloped in dark threatening clouds. The Indian reaction was sharp and swift.

Srinivasa Iyengar, President of the Indian National Congress, issued on November 14, a statement proclaiming boycott of and resistance to the Commission, on the ground that the British Government in defiance of the opinion of all parties in India and of the national demand made twice in the Assembly, had deliberately decided to appoint an all British Commission, and rejected the natural claim of the Indians to determine their own constitution. The statement repudiated the assumption that the Parliament had the right to enquire into the fitness of India for Swaraj, or to determine the measure of responsible government, and protested against the affront to Indian self-respect involved in the exclusion of Indians from the Commission. The Congress was determined, therefore, not to give evidence, not to serve upon the

[18] Quoted by Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax*, p. 146

Central or Provincial Select Committees, nor to vote for their formation. Congressmen would not meet the Commission or participate in parties in their honour. But the Congress would proceed to frame a Swaraj Constitution for India with the help of other parties.

On November 16, Jinnah in a statement to the press said that he had received the most powerful and influential support from all parts of India, from the foremost leaders of the Indian National Congress, the All-India Muslim League, the All-India Liberal Federation, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce, and the Mill-owners Association, as also the Hindu Mahasabha. They had given their consent to sign the manifesto declaring that Indians could not "conscientiously take any part or share in the work of the Commission as at present constituted".

Among the signatories were Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sivaswami Aiyer, Annie Besant, Chimanlal Setalvad, Dinshaw Petit, Jinnah, Abdul Rahim, Ali Imam.

The actual declaration of boycott of which they had previous notice, however, took the Government by surprise. Irwin in his vexation informed Birkenhead : "At some point or other a clash between what even moderate Indian political leaders feel bound to demand and what the majority of British opinion would feel able to give is inevitable, and I am not sure that it is not better to have it at this stage than later."[19]

He repeated his sense of annoyance in a letter to the King. He said, "I frankly cannot begin to understand what they think they gain by such proceedings. The truth I really believe is this : they are very much afraid of being placed in a position in which they would be definitely faced with the obligation to make a constructive effort of their own, and of the discredit that would attach to any failure to meet this test."[20]

Birkenhead made belated apologies for his policy in the House of Lords on November 24, 1927. He repeated the same arguments—that the Parliament could not be divested of its responsibility in the matter of framing the constitution for India, that the Indian people were incapable of doing so, as the political parties could not speak on behalf of the vast majority of their countrymen, especially the Depressed Classes; that there was no organisation to represent even all the Hindus apart from the non-Hindus; that in spite of these drawbacks, he invited the Indian parties to produce a constitution of their own which would be given due consideration, that he meant no affront to Indians and had made a provision for consultation between the Government and the Select Committees of the Central and Provincial legislatures.

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[19] *Irwin Papers* : Irwin to Birkenhead, November 16, 1927.

[20] *Ibid.*, Vol. I. Letters and telegrams to H.M. the King. Viceroy to King, February 29, 1928.

Birkenhead's eloquence won him the unanimous support of the House of Lords, but in India it had the contrary effect of strengthening the resolve to non-cooperate with the Commission. It seemed most amazing to Indians that of all people the British statesmen should propose that the constitutional laws according to which Indians would be expected to exercise the legislative, executive and judicial functions appertaining to their own governance and which they would have to apply, administer and adapt to meet the varying needs of their own society, should be drafted, enacted and imposed by an external authority. Gandhiji had mentioned Ireland which should have served as an example appropriate to the Indian situation. For what did the Party to which Irwin belonged do in the case of Ireland?

The leaders of the Conservative Party bitterly opposed the Liberal Irish Home Rule Bill of 1912, and taught the Protestants of Ulster to wage a violent non-cooperation campaign against Britain. Bonar Law, on July 27, 1912, addressed a monster meeting at Blenheim Palace and spoke these words : "In my opinion, if an attempt were made without the clearly expressed will of the people of this country, and as part of a corrupt Parliamentary bargain, to deprive these men (Ulstermen) of their *birthright, they would be justified in resisting by all means in their power, including force.*"[21]

Birkenhead, the swashbuckling colleague of Carson, the instigator of rebellion of the Orangemen, the paladin of government by force, the shining light of the Conservative Party, consented to be one of the four delegates who on behalf of the Coalition Government negotiated from October to December 1921, with De Valera's representatives, Griffith and Collins, and affixed his signature to the document known as "the Articles of agreement for a Treaty", which provided for the Irish Free State.

But Birkenhead and the Indian Government treated India as a case apart and the Indian humanity different from the Irish humanity. The wise advocacy of Gladstone was lost upon them. "It is liberty alone which fits men for liberty. This proposition like every other in politics, has its bounds; but it is far safer than the counter-doctrine, wait till they are fit."[22]

The rulers of India, however, approached the Indian problem on the reverse principle. The stock argument for doing so was that India could not be compared with Ireland or Egypt. Winterton maintained Egypt had one predominant religion which treated all men as equals, Ireland had two religious denominations, but their differences were

[21]Quoted by the Second Earl of Birkenhead in *The life of H. E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, p. 215.

[22] Quoted by Coupland, R., *The Indian Problem*, Part I, p. 54 (Morley, J., *Life of Gladstone*, Vol. III, p. 58).

never so bitter as those between Hindus and Muslims. But one might ask : did Britain really want India to be self-governing? Morley and Crewe had openly declared they had no such intention. Their successors, Montagu, Peel, Olivier and Birkenhead, were not so blunt and outspoken. They professed their faith in the declaration of August 20, 1917, but for them responsible government was the ultimate goal, a distant far-off objective to be attained 'in the fulness of time' by stages determined by the British Parliament on condition the Indians proved their fitness for each advance by dutifully accepting the tutelage of their masters who had undertaken the philanthropic duty of training them.

Parallel with giving this *soi disant* training they were also engaged in the congenial task of destroying the foundations of self-government. They recognised that the basic condition for such government was the unity of the Hindu and Muslim communities. But in spite of their public denials[23] the fact remains that their policies aggravated the differences between them. The British were quite conscious of what they were doing and why. They stigmatized the Indian National Congress as a Hindu organisation hostile to British rule. They looked upon the Muslims as the sure friends of the Empire with whose help they could defeat the Congress aims. The correspondence between the Secretaries of State and the Governors-General quoted in the preceding pages supplies abundant proof of this. Olivier's letter to the *Times* indicated as much, though in the House of Lords he tried to wriggle out of it when Birkenhead and Reading confronted him with his statement.[24]

In this connection it would not be without interest to read a passage from a Muslim author's book in Urdu. He writes how he met (1927) Grant, the Collector of Saharanpur, and discussed with him the problem of Muslim representation in the councils. Grant was in favour of separate electorates, and according to him Marris, the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, was also of the same opinion. When after the interview he met his Muslim friends they told him that

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[23] *Vide* Debate in the House of Lords, dated July 28, 1926. Birkenhead of the Conservative Party, Reading of the Liberal Party and Olivier of the Labour Party absolved Government of the charge of '*divide et empera*'.

[24] The House of Lords, July 28, 1926.

Birkenhead referred in his speech on the India Debate to the view of Olivier expressed in his letter to the *Times* that the Government of India and its officers showed partiality to the Muslims. Reading read out the letter which contained these words, "On the whole there is a predominant bias in British officialdom in India in favour of the Muslim community." Olivier explained, "I do not think there was anything in what I wrote that could have suggested that I had the idea that any British official had ever instigated any riots."

Grant had advised them to hold meetings in favour of separate electorates, with the result that many such meetings were held in a number of districts.[25]

III. Commission's Work in India

The Simon Commission, plentifully forewarned but hopefully expecting the fulfilment of Irwin's assurances, arrived in Bombay on February 3, 1928. It made two visits to India. In the first visit which lasted from February 3 to March 31, 1928, its main task was to examine the papers which the Government of India had prepared on the various aspects of the system of government in India. At the same time the Commission made efforts to explain its own task and the manner in which it proposed to discharge it. This was necessitated by what it considered to be the misunderstandings on which Indian opposition was based.

After spending the summer months in England, it returned to India on October 11 and undertook a long tour of the country to record the evidence of those associations, individuals and officers of the provincial governments which came to urge their views or offer explanation on the points that arose out of the written memoranda.

The tour started from Poona and ended at Delhi. The Commission held sessions in Madras, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Delhi, Lucknow, Patna, Calcutta, Shillong, Rangoon, Madras and Nagpur. Finally it came back to Delhi where from March 21, 1929 to April 4 it held discussions with the Government of India. On April 13, it sailed back for England.

On its tour at the places where it stopped to take evidence and examine witnesses, the Commission sat with the Central Committee and the provincial committee appointed by the council of the province. In England it was joined by the Central Committee (19th June to 30th July) for deliberations and exchange of views. According to the procedure laid down, the reports of the Central Committee of the Indian Central Legislature and of the Statutory Commission were separately written and submitted to Parliament.

The Central Committee presented its report on December 29, 1929 and the Commission's Report which was in two parts—survey and recommendations, was signed on May 12 and May 27, 1930. Before the Report was finalized, however, certain decisions of Government and the announcement of the Viceroy on October 31, 1929 substantially changed the situation. The procedure laid down at the time of the

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[25] Tufail Ahmad Manglori, *Musalmanon Ka Roshan Mustaqbil* (Bright Future of the Muslims) (Urdu), p. 419.

appointment of the Commission was materially modified in deference to the wishes of the people of India which greatly influenced the opinion of those who had opposed the Commission.

The statement of Irwin which was then regarded as of historical importance was prepared during Irwin's visit to England and after discussion between him and the Labour Government which had come into office in June 1929. Its main object was to conciliate the political parties which had boycotted the Simon Commission and to secure their cooperation in the plans of Government to further the processings of legislation in Parliament. The statement affirmed the right of Parliament to form its own judgement of the Indian constitutional problem, but conceded the importance of reaching a solution which might convey the assent of the Indian political parties.

Then it went on to announce the two important decisions of Government, *viz.* (1) setting up of a Round Table Conference where the representatives of India would confer with His Majesty's Government for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which the Government would place before Parliament, the terms of this agreement would then be embodied in a draft bill to be examined by the Joint Parliamentary Committee in consultation with the delegates from the Indian legislature, and finally submitted to Parliament; (2) declaring in clear terms the view of His Majesty's Government, namely, that the declaration of 1917 implied that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of Dominion Status.

The new procedure was intended to meet the objection that Indians had not been given an equal status with the British in the formulation of the constitution of India. The provision of the Round Table Conference where Indian representatives and the delegates of the British Government would meet on equal terms removed this grievance. The declaration of Dominion Status was ambiguous, and in any case lost all significance as a result of debates in Parliament.

But India put its own interpretation on the declaration and chose to imagine that the Round Table Conference would proceed in its discussions on the basis that Dominion Status with such necessary limitations as were agreed upon was the immediate goal. Disillusionment awaited them at no distant date.

The decision, however, to discuss the issues at the Round Table Conference, was a virtual rejection of the Simon Commission Report, even before it had been completed. Simon was naturally very sore about it and vigorously attacked Irwin's right to make the announcement without his consent. But the Government of Ramsay MacDonald as the head of the Labour Party (June 1929 to August 1931) stood by Irwin's declaration.

It is not, therefore, necessary to consider the Report at length. But the document embodying the unanimous views of a group of Englishmen representing the three Parliamentary Parties affords a valuable key to the mind of the British ruling class, and therefore needs serious consideration.

IV. Simon Commission Report

The Commissioners state in the introduction to the Report, "We enter upon our task, therefore, upon the basis of the assumption that the goal defined by Mr. Montagu represented the accepted policy to be pursued, and that the only proposals worthy to be considered are proposals conceived in the spirit of the announcement of the 20th August, 1917."

In order to determine the extent to which it was desirable to establish and extend the principle of responsible government it was necessary to examine how far the essential conditions for responsible government existed in India.

Now the only essential condition of self-government is the existence among the people of the will to live together under a common political order, the desire—held by deliberation or by acquiescence, to maintain this order, its integrity and freedom against internal and external threats, the capacity to restrain the impulse to pursue particular sectional interests at the expense of the integrity of the state; in other words, the consciousness of unity so strong as to resist and overcome the interests of the parts when they come into conflict with the good of the whole. This consciousness is the feeling of nationalism; community of race, religion, language, culture, and traditions are aids but not necessary conditions of nationalism.

In order to discover whether such a consciousness existed in India or not the Commission travelled 14,000 miles in India and interviewed numerous persons. The search was, however, vitiated by the personal limitations of its members, as also by the outlook of the sort of people who tendered evidence. The Commissioners came from a society which, compared to India, was much more homogeneous in culture and mental habits, much smaller in size and numbers, and much more integrated in organisation. It was natural for men of Liliputian experience to see the divisions and diversities of India on a Brobdingnagian scale. Everything was enormous, vast, incommensurable.

On the other score, the Indian witnesses who appeared before them represented particularist and factional interests—the Muslim and the Hindu communalists, the non-Brahmins, the Mahrattas, the Depressed Class representatives, the advocates of Europeans, Anglo-Indians,

Christians, and Sikhs, and land, labour and other interests. Obviously these narrow particularist groups, singly or collectively, did not represent the deep permanent—present as well as future, material and moral good of the people of India as a whole. They naturally laid stress upon their separate claims, and were unmindful of what they owed to the country as a whole. At one stage the Chairman of the Commission had to administer a rebuke to the extravagant claims of a communal deputation.

It is not surprising that the passionately argued pleadings of such men should have strengthened the natural leanings of the Commissioners, specially when many officials of the Government supported these one-sided demands.

The Commission, however, made a casual attempt to acquaint itself with the other side of the case also. It studied the Nehru Report which represented the Congress point of view. It could not ignore two other series of recoils having a bearing on this problem—the Nationalist Party's solid achievements as a successful opposition in the legislature, and the widespread public demonstrations of non-acceptance of the Commission in response to the appeals of political leaders which signified the rejection of the claim of Parliament to be the sole judge of India's fitness and the authority to examine India's claim to self-government. Even the blind could not fail to perceive that whatever the disagreements between the groups and communities, there was overwhelming agreement among them on the question of transfer of power.

The total result of these factors was that the Commission remained hesitant and doubtful, unable to make up its mind whether to go forward or retreat. It recognised that there was in India "an increasing sense of Indian nationality. . . . Whatever may be the shortcomings and however distasteful some of its manifestations, it appears to be the one force in Indian society to-day that may perhaps contain within itself the power to overcome the deep and dangerous cleavages that threaten the peace."[26]

But then this was riddled with doubts, "Sectional interests—racial, religious, caste or provincial—still tend to absorb the energies and devotions of the majority of Indians, and there are too few signs yet of a willingness to surrender such claims to the common good. But without such a surrender there is little hope for the growth of a true sense of citizenship." Yet, "Indian nationalism is a phenomenon which cannot be disregarded by the rulers either of British India or of the Indian States."[27]

What would one expect from such views? What recommendations

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[26] *Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, p. 12, para 19.
[27] *Ibid.*

regarding such problems as the structure of government, representation of the people in the legislatures, formation of ministries and allocation of their powers? What proposals to counteract the sectional tendencies and encourage the development of a true sense of nationality?

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was quite categorical on the question of communal electorates. They wrote, "We conclude unhesitatingly that the history of self-government among the nations who developed it, and spread it through the world is decisively against the admission by the state of any divided allegiance against the state's arranging its members in any way which encourages them to think of themselves primarily as citizens of any smaller unit than itself."[28]

It continues, "Indian lovers of their country would be the first to admit that India generally has not yet acquired the citizen spirit, and if we are really to lead her to self-government, we must do all that we possibly can to call it forth in her people. Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organised against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens; and it is difficult to see how the change from this system to national representation is ever to come."[29]

While the Commission was deliberating on the pros and cons of communal representation, Olivier, ex-Secretary of State, warned them in very strong terms against the system in an article he contributed to the *Contemporary Review*. He stated :

"The system of communal representation is a disastrous expedient bound to be fatal to the satisfactory working of any constitution that embodies it. It is an obvious and admitted fact that the existence of the communal electoral system now aggravates and exacerbates communal rivalries and hostilities between Indians whose political interests, in all matters falling within the sphere of the mechanism of government are independent of creed. Moreover the expedient is in itself ineffective."[30]

On merits the Commission agreed with Montagu and Chelmsford. They wrote : "Communal electorates, the authors of the Joint Report declared, perpetuate class distinction and stereotype existing relations and they constitute a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle. If it be a prejudice to hold those views, we admit that we share them."[31]

In spite of the unanswerable arguments against the system of communal electorates the Commission arrived at the conclusion :

"We are unanimous in holding that communal representation for

28 *Report of the Indian Constitutional Reforms*, p. 111, para 228.

29 *Ibid.*, p, 111, para 229.

30 Quoted in *Indian Annual Register*, 1927, Vol. II, p. 74, from the *Contemporary Review*, May 1927.

31 *Indian Statutory Commission Report*, Vol. 2, p. 56, para 69.

the Mohammedans of a province must be continued, and that Mohammedan voters could not be deprived of this special protection."[32]

According to them "the subject of communal representation is preeminently one which the rival communities should settle among themselves."[33]

What were the reasons behind this flagrant and deliberate refusal to recommend the type of electoral arrangement which was so essential for establishing responsible government? Before the question is answered it is necessary to examine the reasons given by the Commission.

Their first reason was that the British Government had given pledges to Muslims which could not be stepped aside. Morley and Minto in 1909 and Montagu and Chelmsford in 1919 had incorporated these pledges in Acts of Parliament, and the Statutory Commission could not depart from such solemn commitments. But if they did, the Muslims would be deeply offended and might create a situation of grave difficulty for Government.

The first part of the argument is quite irrelevant, for the history of British rule in India is littered with violated agreements and repudiated pledges. Promises, treaties, proclamations—particular and general—have been forgotten and scrapped at the sweet will and convenience of the rulers.

Did then the threat of Muslim resentment influence British policy?

Not to go back further but to confine oneself to the history of the recent years only, there is the example of the Partition of Bengal which was rescinded in spite of Muslim protests; the unprecedentedly violent agitation for the restoration of the Khilafat, in spite of the fact that it was supported by the non-Muslims, went unheeded. It could not affect the British policy towards Turkey.

When it is remembered that communal representation was against the long-term interests of the Muslims themselves, this does not seem to be an adequate reason for acceptance.

Another reason given was that the Congress had approved it in the Lucknow Pact of 1916. It is forgotten that it was a temporary lapse on the part of the Congress which is proved by the fact that from 1909 till 1916 and afterwards in the Nehru Report (1927-28) separate communal electorates were condemned. In 1927 an important section of the Muslim League led by Jinnah was willing to forgo separate representation provided certain conditions were fulfilled.

The Commission relied also on the advice which was received from a number of Provincial Committees which approved the system.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 60, para 72.

[33] *Ibid.*

Against them there was the emphatic opinion of the Central Committee. But it was ignored.

The Commission was impressed with the fact that the Muslims were oppressed by a sense of fear concerning their rights—religious, economic, political and cultural, and were naturally anxious to safeguard them. They therefore wanted that guarantees should be built into the constitution so that no encroachments might be made on them.

What was the aetiology of this fear? And was separate representation the proper remedy for it? Now sentiments of security or insecurity are due partly to the relations of the different communities which inhabit a country, but they are affected for better or worse by the manner and method of the ruling authority. It does not require any elaborate argument to prove that not only public measures, policies and laws, but also direct and indirect influences that a government exerts extensively and powerfully, aid in shaping the opinions and practices of its subjects. Government's favour and patronage ordinarily sought by the various groups constituting a people do rouse fears and jealousies, hopes and expectations.

In India as in all other countries groups and communities with diverse religions, cultures and interests inhabit the land. But this diversity does not necessarily generate distrust and hostility in every country. Why should it have done so in India?

The facts of Indian history during the Middle Ages do not show any wars of religion like the ones which took place in Europe of the 16th and 17th centuries. Under the Mughal rule even when there was some religious intolerance and occasional riots there is no evidence of a general mutual distrust between the communities. In politics which was the sphere of government there was no room for competition or rivalry, for medieval politics was confined to a narrow oligarchy.

The chief of the oligarchy was more concerned with the mundane affairs like collection of revenue and organising military campaigns than with matters of religious concern. The case of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb illustrates the point. He was a narrow-minded monarch who tried to rule according to the strict tenets of the *Shariat*. Besides, he had a suspicious temper. But his actions show that his mistrust in his officers was equally distributed among the Hindus and Muslims. In his expeditions and wars against the rebels and enemies of the empire he employed simultaneously both Hindu and Muslim commanders. His army against Shivaji was led by Raja Jai Singh. Rajput and Maratha Sardars fought against the Marathas. They fought side by side with Mughal, Afghan and Turani and Irani military officers against the Muslim kingdom in the Deccan as well as the Muslim enemy forces on the north-western frontiers.

There is no indication in the history of the six centuries when the

Muslims ruled that they were ever frightened by the idea of being overwhelmed by the Hindu majority. With the single exception of Ahmad Shah Abdali, there is no instance when an Indian Muslim ruler ever sought to obtain any aid or to form an alliance with any Muslim king outside India in order to maintain his rule over the people of India. On the contrary, instead of cultivating friendly relations with the Muslims in the neighbouring countries, they waged incessant wars against the kingdoms of Iran and Central Asia.

The general feeling of suspicion and fear is the product of modern times and British rule is responsible for it, to no mean extent. The rivalries between the two communities were fomented from the earliest days when the East India Company began to lay the foundations of British dominion in India. This policy has been pursued ever since. Only during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century the British leaned upon the Hindus and looked upon the Muslims as their enemies. From the third quarter of the nineteenth century the roles were reversed. Especially, after the appearance of the Indian National Congress, the Hindus became the challengers of the supremacy of the Empire. In the changed circumstances the main object of policy was to undermine the influence of this hostile organisation by identifying it with the Hindu community and condemning it as the enemy of both the British Raj and its new proteges, the Muslims.

Against the British the charge is, not that they created the differences, but that they made political capital out of the differences in order to promote Britain's imperial interests. They nurtured the differences, specially among the politically minded intellectuals, who were the moulders of public opinion.

In so far as the needy and gullible intellectuals themselves behaved in a short-sighted manner, lent themselves to the machinations of the British officials by accepting their favours and fearing their frowns, the blame for the rivalries and dissensions lies equally on their shoulders.

But whatever the reasons, whatever the responsibility of the communities and the Government, the Commission maintained that the fact of apprehensions, fears and jealousies could not be denied, and, therefore, it was their duty to devise remedial measures. Accordingly they came to the conclusion that statutory provision should be made for the continuance of separate electorates and representation of the Muslim community and some other minorities.

While it must be admitted that the Muslim fears were both genuine, deep-rooted and widely entertained, was the proposed remedy appropriate ? Now it is well known that laws and constitutions must ultimately depend on the will of the people concerned. Where there is a genuine desire on the part of the constituent elements of society—groups and communities, to observe the laws there is a guarantee that they

will prevail and that no infringement will take place. But the precondition of this state of affairs is the existence of mutual trust and understanding. It was futile to expect in the absence of communal harmony and mutual regard that the paper provisions of a constitution would be effective.

A somewhat specious argument was also advanced, namely, that the differences between the Hindu and Muslim religions were so much wider than the differences between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants of European countries that they did not offer any parallel applicable to the Indian situation, and therefore the intractability remained almost insoluble. The argument shows a surprising lack of understanding of the European experience. That the differences between the two sects of the Christian religion are not as large as the differences between the beliefs and rituals of Hinduism and Islam is incontrovertible but irrelevant. What really matters is the intensity of feeling which inspired their followers and determined their mutual relations.

The differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, however small, did not prevent the terrible massacres and bloodshed which characterized the history of England, France, Netherlands, Germany and Bohemia during the 16th and 17th centuries. Today the two live together in these same lands, profess their beliefs and perform their ritual without disturbing their political life.

Yet in the tiny state of Ulster (Ireland) in the years 1970-72, the Roman Catholics and Protestants are shedding one another's blood under the eyes of the British army, in spite of the tiny character of their religious disagreements.

The disparity between the Sunnis and Shias is even less than that between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. Yet Islamic history is bespattered with the torrents of blood that the two have shed through the centuries. Even today their sectarian quarrels some time lead to outbursts of violence and murder.

Not, then, the degree or extent of the differences between religions and cultures, but the intrinsic strength and quality of the passions of the partisans, which is indeed significant.

All this discussion of religious, linguistic and cultural differences assumes its importance only in relation to the politics in which the government of a country is involved. Differences are inevitable in every society, for social uniformity or homogeneity is impossible and inconceivable. Some governments seek to harmonize the differences, to emphasize unities and discourage diversities. Free and democratic national politics realize that their strength which is the guarantee of their internal progress and the shield against external hostility, must be based upon social solidarity and mutual goodwill. They promote these

desirable traits among their people. The alien rulers of a country, however, whose domination depends upon the inability of their subjects to challenge their supremacy are either positively hostile to the development of unity or indifferent, denying their own responsibility for differences and transferring it on to the subject people.

Apart from the arguments of the Commission, it is proper to consider the claims of the Muslims on their own merit. The Muslim demand was that both quantitatively and qualitatively their community should have adequate representation in the councils. So far as the numbers were concerned, there appeared to be no unbridgeable difference between them and the Hindu nationalists. The Indian National Congress had adopted a formula based upon the voting strength of the minorities in the various provinces which was accepted by the Muslim League at Lucknow in 1916. The Nehru Committee had agreed to change the basis of representation to population ratio. Nor was there any insuperable objection about weightage whether at the centre or in the provinces. The other conditions, proposed by the conference of the Muslim League at Delhi in 1927, were negotiable and capable of adjustment.

The real controversy was about the quality of representatives. The Muslims contended that in any joint or mixed electorate in the territories with preponderant non-Muslim voters, only those Musalman candidates had a chance of success who were acceptable to non-Muslims and therefore the truly representative Musalmans would not be elected.

This view was based on the experience of bodies which had elected and nominated members. In the Governor-General's Legislative Council till the Curzonian era (1905) the number of Muslim non-official members was inadequate, and the same was true of some of the provincial councils. In Bengal with a Muslim majority, the Europeans had the largest number of representatives, then came the Hindus, while the Muslims were ordinarily one-fourth of the Hindus, and sometimes even less. The situation in the municipalities and district boards was on the whole no better, although there were exceptions. In the university senates the Muslims had few members.

But the situation was changing and the Lucknow Pact had definitely given a new turn to the problem of Muslim representation. In 1929, there was little justification for this complaint. From the longer point of view this Muslim insistence was merely a hangover of the past. The view showed ignorance of the ways of elections and was unrealistic in so far as it assumed that in all matters coming before the councils the Muslim point of view differed from the non-Muslim point of view. The fact is that in a large majority of these matters the differences are

based on political and economic principles and in only a very small number of cases on religious grounds.

In the second place, this view exhibited a sad lack of confidence by the Muslims in their candidates. They took it for granted that a Muslim seeking election could be easily purchased or coerced to act against his conscience. It did not strike the communal Muslim leaders that separate electorates deprived the Muslims of the opportunity of influencing the Hindu electors, and made the Hindus indifferent to Muslim opinion.

Even a more vitally important consequence seems to have attracted little attention. A responsible government must function as a collective body, it must have common policies and programmes, for without coherence among the ministers in charge of administration on matters of policy, the Executive of the government ceases to exercise collective responsibility. It is impossible for a ministry which is composed of members, some of whom owe allegiance to one section of the legislature, and the others to another section, to work as a team. Such a government can neither be stable nor effective, nor a government.

It is difficult to believe that the Commission members were unaware of these matters. If knowing all this they still clung to the communal electoral system which divides society and breaks up the very foundation upon which the structure of responsible government is built, *viz.*, the electorate, then one is forced to the conclusion that the Commission did not really want to concede the claim for self-government, and desired that Britain should remain as the supreme arbiter of India's destiny.

It is not surprising that the Indian leaders came to the conclusion that the purpose of the Commission was not the one professed in public, namely, to direct the advance of India towards Dominion Status, but to mark time and keep off the evil day. Birkenhead had hardly any interest or faith in India's future. His faith was "our expanding destiny as leaders of mankind".

Twice before in 1909 and 1919, the self-appointed trustees of India had betrayed the interests of their so-called trust, by imposing upon India a system of representation which was known to be contrary to the fundamental principles of self-government, and which, in practice, prevented the harmonization of communal interests.

A third time in 1929, the occasion arose to rectify the two earlier mistakes. Unfortunately the rulers of India again failed to do the right. This third failure proved fatal. The Simon Commission sealed the fate of India. It is true that to all appearances the recommendations contained in the Report were thrown open for discussion and settlement at the Round Table Conference. But the Report unanimously signed by the representatives of the three political parties in Parliament

could not be ignored by the parties concerned. It was bound to influence not only the minds of those who took part in the Conference on behalf of the Government—members of Parliament, but also representatives of factional interests, and of the minority groups. The failure of the Conference to solve the problem of minority representation for reasons which will be explained in the following pages, retransferred the initiative and decision from Indian to British hands.

V: Indian Reaction to the Statutory Commission Report

The Indian reaction had three aspects: (a) of resentment and negation which inspired the boycott of the Commission, the demonstration of protest, and the Satyagraha movement; (b) of positive endeavour to remove communal differences, and (c) of constructive response to the challenge of producing an Indian Constitution.

The Boycott Movement

The statements issued by Srinivasa Iyengar and Jinnah on November 16 set the pace of counteraction. The speeches of Birkenhead, Reading and Olivier in the debate in the House of Lords on November 24, 1927 confirmed Indian resolve to refuse any recognition to the Commission. On December 27, the Congress met at Madras, discussed the question and decided to boycott the Commission. On the same day the Liberal Federation presided over by Tej Bahadur Sapru adopted a similar resolution. The Muslim League session which was held in December at Calcutta under the chairmanship of Muhammad Yaqub also resolved to boycott the Commission and appointed a committee to prepare a constitution for India in consultation with other parties.

The lead given by the three principal political parties was followed by many others, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Khilafat Conference, and so on.

It is necessary to understand the general background in which the Indian reaction developed and the resolutions were executed. The arrival of the Statutory Commission in India took place at a time of severe economic distress. The last of the series of quiet and calm years was the year 1926. The signs of the coming stormy weather began to appear in 1927. In both the agricultural and industrial sectors distress was increasing. The agricultural population which consisted of about 74 per cent of the population suffered from 'poverty of a dangerous kind', as millions lived on the margin of subsistence. Then the perennial enemies which continued to inflict suffering were indebtedness, fragmentation of holdings, under-employment or unemployment,

under-nourishment and disease. In spite, however, of the fact that the life of the rural people was still largely static, isolated and medieval, the new breeze of modernism had started blowing. Increase in the facilities of transport and communications was bringing them into contact with the towns and the stirrings of the new spirit and exposing them to the economic effects of a world market which had repercussions on agricultural technique, crops, etc. Since the Reforms of 1919 administrative developments in the field of transferred departments—local self government, panchayats, Boards and village unions—were changing old habits and opinions.

The growth of education and the press—the Indian language newspapers specially, and the widespread stimulus of the Gandhian non-cooperation movement had awakened a new consciousness among the masses.

Actual distress and the consciousness of distress inevitably combined to stimulate agitation and incite political activity.

The immediate cause of aggravation was the fall in the world prices of raw products which India exported. In 1926-27 the exports fetched 20 per cent less than in 1925-26. India was obliged to pay higher prices for the manufactured goods which were imported. The tendency continued in the following year. In 1925-26 the exports were valued at Rs. 385 crores, in 1926-27 Rs. 309 crores and in 1929-30 Rs. 311 crores. The decline in the earnings of agricultural products of cotton, jute, seeds, cereals, etc., hit the people of the villages hard. It depressed their standard of living. It increased discontent, which was prone to burst out anywhere, as it did in Bardoli in 1928.

In the industrial sector the effect of the rise of prices of articles imported from abroad, for instance, cloth, was to increase the burden of the working class whose wages lagged behind the price increase. The dissatisfaction manifested itself in strikes in the Indian industries like textile mills of cotton and jute and in railways. In 1926 only, 1.1 million working days were lost and the strikes were peaceful. In 1927-28 the loss was nearly doubled. In the following year 31.6 million days were wasted. The workers of the textile mills of the Bombay Presidency, the Tata Iron and Steel Works, the jute mills of Bengal, and the workers of the East Indian and South Indian Railways observed long duration strikes. At Bamangachia in Bengal firing took place.

The Government official report for the year 1928-29 records, "The industrial life of India was far more disturbed than during the preceding years."[34]

In 1929-30, the world economic recession which had begun with

[34] *India in 1928-29*, p. 7.

the collapse of the Wall Street (USA) swiftly travelled across the European continent and cast its shadow over Indian economy. The foreign trade of India and the Indian industries received a severe jolt, and distress became general.

It was due to these conditions that there was at this time a recrudescence of the Terrorist movement. Bomb-throwing took place in the Panjab and Bengal, and along with it dacoities were committed. In the last month of the year Saunders, the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Lahore, was shot. In April 1929, a bomb was thrown in the Legislative Assembly. An attempt was made to blow up the viceregal train.

Another symptom of India's troubled state was the growth of the Communist Party. As early as 1920 the Communist Party of USSR had decided "to take concrete measures to spread revolution in the East". In 1924, Chicherin declared that "future India must stand at the head of the free Eastern Republics." M. N. Roy, who had adopted the communist creed and who as a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International had become an adviser of the Party in Moscow on Indian affairs, was responsible for sending Indian communists trained in Russia to spread the communist ideology among Indians and to establish communist cells.

By 1924 the communist propaganda had made considerable headway. So much so that the Government took alarm and started the Cawnpore (Kanpur) Conspiracy case against four important leaders of the Party—S. A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani and Nalin Gupta. They were convicted and jailed.

Their removal was a setback to the movement. In order to restore the fortunes of the Party a number of the British communists arrived in India in 1926, especially to spread communist ideas among the Trade Unions.

They together with the Indian communists released from the Cawnpore jail revived the Party. A conference of the Party members was held at Calcutta in December 1928 to reorganise the Party and to define its object. By 1928 "the flood tide of communism was at its height." The Party played a notable role in the strikes of 1928-29. Again the Government struck before the party programme had much advanced. Thirty-two leading members including some comrades from England were arrested in March 1929 and at Meerut a case was launched against them for conspiring to deprive the King-Emperor of the sovereignty of British India.

In an atmosphere surcharged with excitement the Simon Commission landed at Bombay on February 8, 1928. It was greeted with hartals (closing of shops), demonstration of black flags, meetings and processions of protests all over India. The Government as usual was

out of touch with the people, and lived in splendid isolation. It was surrounded either by sycophants, job hunters and patronage seekers or men of status and property who were afraid of any kind of change. The Government was taken by surprise. Irwin expressed his chagrin in his letters to the King and the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State dismissed the opposition with lofty disdain. He was sure he could put 'the pestiferous chatterers' in their place.

But if he seriously believed that he could overawe the opposition by minatory gestures, he was sadly mistaken. Nor could the assurances of soft-spoken Simon concerning the procedure of business which the Commission intended to follow by associating the Central and Provincial Committees in examining witnesses deceive the Indian leaders. Lajpat Rai of the Nationalist Party in the Assembly on February 16, 1928, moved in the legislature the following resolution :

"The Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council that he be pleased to convey to His Majesty's Government the Assembly's entire lack of confidence in the Parliamentary Commission which has been appointed to recast the constitution of India."[35]

He made it clear in his speech that the problem of India in its relation with England was not a problem for any commission of enquiry. "It was a problem for negotiation and agreement."[36]

Crerar, the Home Member of the Government of India, opposed the motion on the ground that the ultimate conclusion of the enquiry must rest in the last resort with Parliament. He insisted that the enquiry into such questions as the rights of the minorities, the communal differences, the provincial finance, etc., was necessary. He held that the procedure laid down by the Commission for consultation with the councils met the Indian objection regarding their claim to participate in constitution-making.

Among those who replied to the Home Member were Motilal Nehru and Jinnah. On the conclusion of the debate the motion was put to vote and carried by 68 votes against 62. The Legislative Assembly thus registered its disapproval of the Statutory Commission. There were some groups, however, which extended their cooperation to the Commission, e.g., the faction of the Muslim League headed by Muhammad Shafi, the Depressed Classes led by Ambedkar and the non-Brahmins of Madras, and a few other parties representing special interests. But there is no doubt that the overwhelming weight of political opinion in India was against any dealings with the Commission. The *Pioneer* wrote:

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[35] The Indian Legislative Assembly debate on the Simon Commission, dated February 16, 1928. *Legislative Assembly Debates* (1st February to 7th March 1928), Vol. I, p. 382.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 383.

"Despite the optimistic generalizations of Sir John Simon the *Pioneer* does not believe the parliamentary visit of the Commission to India has been a success.... The support is sectional and spasmodic and by no means representative of political India."[37]

This was very abundantly demonstrated by the events which occurred during the stay of the Commission in India and immediately afterwards. Processions flying black flags and shouting slogans like 'Simon go back', massive meetings demanding recall of the Commission, stoppage of business and complete social boycott greeted the Commission wherever it went and in most Indian towns. The boycott was so effective that the Commission had to be sneaked from the railway station to their place of residence. The police had to protect them from being mobbed and to cordon off the demonstrators on the routes.

The excessive zeal of the police led to unwholesome and even brutal incidents, for the crowds were pushed back by force and charged with *lathis* (staves). Two of these incidents which were condemned by the whole country occurred at Lahore on October 30, 1928 and at Lucknow on November 30. In the first Lajpat Rai and a number of other leaders of the Panjab were the victims of a savage police attack. The death of Lajpat Rai soon after the incident was attributed to the injuries he had received. At Lucknow Jawaharlal Nehru and other prominent citizens received similar shameful treatment.

On the part of the people the maintenance of peace was remarkable, for the excitement was immense, police behaviour provocative, and the participants in boycott large in numbers. The agitation was unfortunately marred by two isolated happenings in Madras and Calcutta on the day of the arrival of the Commission, when riots broke out.

While the Commission doggedly pursued its programme, seemingly oblivious of the stormy scenes and angry protests, the Government could not ignore the manifestations of bitter resentment inside and outside the Council Chamber. Irwin was forced to take note because his earlier forecasts about the Indian reaction had proved altogether false. On May 26, 1927, he had written to the Secretary of State that the vocal political parties were not representative of India and therefore he did not expect an effective boycott of a Parliamentary Commission. In fact he believed "the Moslems almost certainly would not boycott and this was bound to affect the decision of the Hindus."[38] He asked Birkenhead to take care of the Moderates through Sinha. He assured him in another letter that the Hindu

[37] *The Pioneer*, March 29, 1928.

[38] *Irwin Papers*. Viceroy to Birkenhead, May 26, 1927.

boycott could be successfully countered by a combination of the Muslims, the Princes and the Moderates.[39]

But his exercises in cajoling and threatening the Indian Congress leaders had little effect, and he had to admit that a conflict between the Government and the Congress was inevitable. A perturbed and agitated Viceroy confessed to the Secretary of State on February 9, 1928, "the impossibility of predicting at any moment what the Indian politicians will do".[40]

Another shock to Irwin's complacency was given by the talk of complete independence among a section of young Congressmen. But he consoled himself with the thought that in the first place Indians did not mean what they said, and secondly, the word independence was so vague as to be capable of meaning Home Rule or Dominion Status or separation from the British Empire.[41] His self-confidence was somewhat restored because the Nehru Report had been rejected by the Muslims, and especially Jinnah, who had been zealously prompting cooperation between the Muslim League and the Congress, had been disappointed.

When in the session of the Congress at Calcutta in December 1928 a difference of opinion arose between the advocates of Dominion Status versus Independence he hoped it would lead to a split and "the diminution of the so-called national authority of the Congress".[42] But the swing towards the left which the Calcutta Congress displayed alarmed him, and he began to contemplate action against the Congress, and to meet the threat of civil disobedience. In this connection he saw Vithalbhai Patel, President of the Legislative Assembly, who advised Irwin to contact Gandhiji because in his opinion Gandhiji was in favour of the British connection and would not make difficulty about an accommodation of the Dominion Status idea by which foreign affairs, political and possibly defence should be reserved in some manner to be defined.[43]

The boycott campaign, the challenge of the Congress, the growth of communism, the labour unrest, and the jauntings of "Simon and his merrymen" in search of "the kind of framework and shop-window and phraseology"[44] with which the Commission would fill in the picture, were worrying the Viceroy. So he decided to leave on June 29, 1929 for England in order to consult the new Labour Government. In June 1929, the Conservative Party failed to get a majority in the House of Commons, and Ramsay MacDonald, though the leader of the

[39] *Ibid.*, October 5, 1927.
[40] *Ibid.*, February 9, 1928.
[41] *Ibid.*, June 28, 1928.
[42] *Ibid.*, December 27, 1928.
[43] *Ibid.* Viceroy to Peel, January 17, 1929.
[44] *Ibid.*, Viceroy to Peel, March 27, 1929.

minority, was installed in the office of the Prime Minister. MacDonald's speeches before he became Prime Minister had raised great hopes in India, and the Viceroy naturally wanted to know the mind of the Government in order to steer his policy in India.

From Simon he had learnt which way the Commission was inclined to go and he saw that that way led towards greater commotion and sharper hostility. It was necessary to devise proposals which would prevent a head-on collision between the Government and the Indian people and divert the Congress from the hard line which it had adopted at Calcutta.

So the Labour Party's Secretary of State Wedgwood Benn and the Viceroy Irwin confabulated and produced a fresh plan of action. According to this the Simon Commission was to be left high and dry and its place for recommending the provisions of a new constitution would be taken by the Round Table Conference, which would consist of representative delegates from Parliament, the Indian States and British India. In order to evade the criticism of the Conservative and Liberal supporters of Simon, the idea of the Conference was fathered on him. He had written a letter to MacDonald about the problem of the Indian States and their futu relationship with British India and suggested a tripartite conference deal with the matter. Wedgwood Benn seized upon his suggestion a . assigned it an importance which Simon was loath to give.

The other part of the plan was the issue of a solemn government declaration that Dominion Status was the goal of India's political progress.

Irwin who was anxious to avert the civil disobedience movement was fortified in his belief that the plan would work because of the assurance of support from Lloyd George, the Liberal leader. Baldwin, the head of the Conservative party, had agreed provided Simon was satisfied. Of course the members of the Labour Government approved.

Then having completed his mission Irwin returned to India and landed at Bombay on October 25. Before a week had passed he made public his plan through the Gazette Extraordinary of October 31, 1929. The statement announced the decision of the Government to hold the Round Table Conference as early as possible, and contained the following declaration :

> "I am authorized on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgement it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as therein contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status."[45]

Irwin had won the first round in the political game.

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[45] *India in 1929-30*, Appendix II, p 468.

A conference of Indian leaders of various parties met at New Delhi immediately after the Viceroy's announcement and after two days' discussion issued a statement on November 2, 1929. It accepted the Viceroy's declaration subject to certain conditions, namely, that the discussion at the Round Table Conference should be on the basis of Dominion Status for India, that the representation of progressive political organizations should be effective and that among them the share of the Indian National Congress should be predominant, and that in order to create a calm atmosphere a policy of general concil'ation should be adopted. To Jawaharlal Nehru, the President-elect of the Congress of 1929 it was a bitter pill to swallow. It caused him great distress to give up the demand for independence, but for the sake of avoiding a split he allowed himself to be coaxed to sign.

But hardly had the ink on the manifesto dried when a debate was raised on the announcement of Irwin in the House of Lords. Reading, the ex-Viceroy, called attention to the statement of the Viceroy and asked the Government to state why the announcement was made before the Commission had reported, and whether it indicated a change of policy regarding the period in which Dominion Status could be attained. He objected to the use of the term Dominion Status, which was likely to raise false hopes in India. Birkenhead in a strongly worded speech accused the Government of yielding to the threat of civil disobedience, charged it with mishandling the situation and affirmed : "No man who has or who ought to retain a character for sanity or responsibility can assign any proximate period to the date at which you can conceive of India becoming a Dominion Status."[46]

Both the Liberal and Conservative Lords expressed their disapproval and annoyance. But Lords Parmoor and Passfield on behalf of the Labour Government assured the House that the arrangement did not mean any departure from settled policy, for all that the Viceroy had done was to remove doubts concerning the ultimate goal of British policy as defined in the proclamation of August 20, 1917. Lord Parmoor agreed to "the necessity of keeping political matters out of all India affairs and questions; there was not the slightest difference between Lord Reading and the Government".[47]

In the House of Commons Baldwin, leader of the Conservatives, and Lloyd George of the Liberals were critical. Both deplored that the Viceroy's announcement was made before the Commission had reported. Lloyd George categorically stated, "Both political parties

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[46] Birkenhead, November 5, 1929. *H. L. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 75, cols. 404-5.

[47] Lord Parmoor, *Ibid.*, col. 389.

(Conservative and Liberal) protested before the Declaration was issued. ... That means that they were opposed to it. ... The first time action has been taken which has divided the nation in reference to India."[48]

He asked the Government to explain what it thought about the Indian interpretation of the obscure phrases in the Declaration, for "it has created an impression in India that it is intended immediately, without delay, to confer full Dominion Status on India, and that the Joint Conference which has been summoned is for the purpose of framing a scheme."[49]

Baldwin said he had given his personal approval subject to the condition that the consent of the Simon Commission was previously obtained, which, he pointed out, was not done.

Lloyd George maintained that "the ultimate goal could only be attained by stages and the length and number of those stages must be determined gradually from time to time by the success that attended the experiment at each stage."[50]

Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, in his reply gave two reasons why the announcement was made. In the first place, it was necessary to allay the doubts which had arisen in India regarding British intentions; and secondly, "to make a good atmosphere for the Report". He was sure that the two objects had been achieved and a great change had taken place in the spirit of India, and that justified the action of Government. He refused to answer Lloyd George's question whether he agreed with the interpretation put upon the declaration by the Indian leaders.

The debate in Parliament and specially the statements of the representatives of Government had a devastating effect on Indians. It was clear to them that they had been misled in their belief that the Conference would discuss the question of the constitution of India on the basis of Dominion Status. Whatever might have been the intentions of Irwin, he was badly let down both by the leaders of the opposition and the Government.

The idea of Dominion Status was watered down to a great extent. What about the other pillar of the structure, viz., the Conference, so carefully designed by its architects—Wedgwood Benn and Irwin? It, too, appeared to be in a parlous state. Benn wrote to Irwin :

> "You know what immense authority belongs in this country to the Simon Report and it is almost dangerous to suggest that the

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[48] Lloyd George, November 7, 1929. *H. C. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 231, col. 1318.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid.*, col. 1316.

Conference may make serious changes in it. . . . What I must strive to do is to habituate the public mind to the notion that the Conference is a fundamental factor."[51]

The much disillusioned and irritated Indian leaders met on 18th November at Allahabad to review the developments since their Delhi meeting. They, however, resolved to stand by the Delhi manifesto and await till the Lahore Congress session for further action.

Subsequently Patel and Sapru saw Irwin and then on December 23 Gandhiji, Motilal, Patel, Sapru and Jinnah interviewed the Viceroy, who explained that it was impossible in any way to prejudge the action of the Conference or to restrain the liberty of Parliament. Thus the demand that the Round Table Conference should meet for the purpose of drafting the Indian constitution on the basis of Dominion Status was finally turned down.

The Viceroy wrote after the interview to the Secretary of State, "They (the protagonists of Congress) really were very impossible and left me more than usually depressed about the lack of political sense that extremist politicians habitually betray."[52] His impression was that the Congress leaders were convinced that they would not be able to surmount the deep-seated difference among the Indian representatives and would consequently fail to present an agreed scheme of the constitution. Therefore they were trying to find excuses for not attending the Conference.

VI. The Congress Declaration of Independence

It is necessary to go back a little in order to understand the reasons for the momentous step the Congress took in December 1929. In February 1924 the Legislative Assembly had demanded the summoning of a Round Table Conference to revise the Act of 1919. The Government refused to accept the resolution. On March 6, 1926, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution asking the members of the Swaraj Party in the Legislative Assembly to raise the constitutional issue once again by moving the rejection of the first demand for grant in the budget of 1926-27. It also enjoined the walk-out of the members of the Assembly in protest against the non-fulfilment of the constitutional demand on a fixed day.

On March 8, Nehru told the Assembly that he had twice before informed the Government that the Swaraj Party refused to participate in an administration forced upon the country against their will. The Government had paid no attention. On the contrary the utterances

[51] *Irwin Papers*: Wedgwood Benn to Viceroy, December 5, 1929.
[52] *Ibid.*, Viceroy to Wedgwood Benn, December 26, 1929.

of the authorities had shown that any further action in the legsilature was futile. He then declared, "We feel that we have no further use for these sham institutions, and the least we can do to vindicate the honour and self-respect of the nation is to get out of them."[53]

In December 1926, the Congress met at Gauhati. Gandhiji, who had kept silent throughout the year, attended the session and took part in the discussion on the motion to amend the Congress creed so as to define Swaraj as complete independence.

The motion was lost because of his opposition. He held that the term Swaraj was all-embracing and included complete independence and therefore did not need explanation or substitution. But the discussion showed which way the wind was blowing.

The reaction of the Government to this trend was to ignore it completely. Birkenhead in his speech in the House of Lords expressed his satisfaction that in the elections of 1926 the Swarajists had received a setback and the Responsivists were forging ahead. In the circumstances he was prepared to consider the appointment of a committee to report on the Reforms earlier than the ten years' period suggested in the Act of 1919.

Consequently on November 8, 1927, it was announced both in London and Delhi that the Government under a royal warrant appointed the Statutory Commission on reforms. The announcement created an uproar in the country.

The Congress of 1927 at Madras was faced with the new situation.

The appointment of an all-White Commission by Birkenhead was a challenge which demanded a reply. For an all-White Commission to enquire into India's fitness for responsibility of government was an affront and the answer was a total refusal to have any dealings with it. To meet his taunting invitation to Indians "to put forward their own suggestions for a constitution", the Congress resolved to authorize the Working Committee to confer with the committees of other organizations, to draft a Swaraj constitution for India and to place it for consideration and approval before an All-Parties Conference and members of the legislatures. In addition it adopted unanimously Jawaharlal Nehru's resolution on independence.

Jawaharlal had come to Madras after spending twenty-one months in Europe. He had travelled extensively over the continent. He acted as the delegate of the Congress at the Brussels Conference of the Oppressed Peoples, associating with politicians of advanced radical

[53] Motilal Nehru, The Legislative Assembly, March 8, 1926 (Delhi session), *Legislative Assembly Debates* (4th March to 25th March 1926), Vol. VII, Part III, p. 2143.

views—socialists, communists and rebels against imperialist governments. He visited Moscow and became an admirer of the Soviet system. He wrote, "Soviet Russia, despite certain unpleasant aspects, attracted me greatly, and seemed to hold forth a message of hope to the world."[54] He returned to India with a broadened outlook and a new angle of vision. It was natural that the concept of Dominion Status, implying partnership in an imperial system, should have appeared to him utterly incongruous.

The unanimous vote on his motion, the manifest enthusiasm of the younger men for the goal of independence, the rise of the working class movement with which Jawaharlal had full sympathy, the indifference which Gandhiji displayed in the Congress discussions at Madras and the acquiescence of the old leaders disappointed by the non pussumus attitude of the Government, committed the national organisation to the ideal from which it was impossible to retreat, except in case Government revised its attitude and extended its hand of friendship.

Throughout 1928 intense excitement prevailed in the country on account of the Simon Commission and its boycott. No stone was left unturned to warn the Government on the consequences of the policy of which the Statutory Commission of exclusively British composition was the expression. Apart from the manifestos, statements and resolutions of the leaders and the political parties, the Legislative Assembly expressed its vehement opposition in no uncertain terms by accepting Lajpat Rai's motion of February 16, 1928.

Government was heedless and Viceroy and the Secretary of State seemed unimpressed. Birkenhead's response was, "Those who delude themselves and India with the impression that by boycotting the Commission they can defeat its purpose, are living in a world that has no contact with reality. . . . I would add that those who are organising boycott. . .will discover month by month how little representative they are of that vast and heterogeneous community of which we are the responsible trustees. They will discover millions of Muslims, millions of the depressed classes, millions of the business and Anglo-Indian community, who intend to put their case before the Commission and that the Commission will ultimately report to Parliament."[55]

Irwin still hoped that the boycott would be defeated because practically all the Muslims were opposed to the plan which the Nehru Committee had evolved for the representation of the Muslims in the constitution. Jinnah had tried to bridge the gulf and had failed, and

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[54] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

[55] Lord Birkenhead's speech at Doncaster on February 17, 1928. Quoted from *Indian Annual Register*, 1928, Vol. I, pp. 391-92.

reconciliation seemed an insoluble problem. So according to him the best course was to hold on till the Commission reported.

Such an impassive attitude on the part of Government, coupled with the communal bickerings caused by the Nehru Report, and the unrest and travail of the people were extremely trying conditions for the Indian leaders. They felt deeply hurt and therefore when the Congress met at Calcutta in December 1928, the delegates were angry and defiant. When Gandhiji moved the resolution on Dominion Status as recommended by the Nehru Committee and approved by the Working Committee, demanding its establishment by December 31, 1930, there was general dissent. Gandhiji had to bow before the strong opposition and modify the period of waiting from December 31, 1930 to December 31, 1929.

The die was cast. India had thrown down the gauntlet, how did the Government pick it up? Irwin thought of meeting Motilal Nehru and endeavouring to persuade him that the Congress resolution was the last word in folly. The intention might have been brave, but it was hazardous to confront the proud leader of the Swarajists with such censorious comments. He thought better of it and sought advice in more congenial quarters. He talked to Chimanlal Setalvad, an eminent Liberal leader, who told him that everything could be put right by some genuine gesture from the Home Government, for instance, an unambiguous declaration that the Dominion Status was the objective of reforms.

Irwin had reached the point where he could see that the situation had so deteriorated as to require drastic treatment, "with the possibility of the problem becoming even more intractable than it is at present and assuming a shape that would not readily yield to the kind of treatment that the extreme wing of our Party might be disposed to recommend".[56]

With this new understanding he proceeded in June 1929 to England to take counsel with the new Labour Government. The result was the declaration of October 31, 1929. But it came too late. The minds of the Congress leaders since December 1928 had been occupied with the new goal of complete independence, and it was psychologically difficult to divert them back into the Dominion Status channel. Nine months of the year for decision had already passed and attitudes had hardened.

And then the declaration, which had produced some favourable impression immediately, lost its effect as a result of Parliamentary discussion. The last-minute effort to repair the damage in a meeting on December 23, 1929, between the Viceroy, Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, Sapru, Jinnah and Vithalbhai Patel, proved a failure. Gandhiji who

[56] Cited in *Early of Birkenhead*, p. 265.

led the discussion demanded an assurance from the Viceroy that the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis that India would immediately get Dominion Status.

What Gandhiji meant by Dominion Status was explained by him in *Young India* of November 14, 1929, He wrote :

> "I can wait for the Dominion Status constitution, if I can get the real Dominion Status in action, if, that is to say, there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting nation, and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service. But that means substitution of the steel bayonet by that of the goodwill of the people."[57]
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> "When, therefore, the Indian is told categorically by British speakers that he cannot expect to attain Dominion Status within the present century, he is left with a general impression that Great Britain does not mean business."

Gandhiji had told Irwin, "If Great Britain could once give up liberty to order our own future, she would be surprised at our diffidence in undertaking responsibilities, and in the degree to which we should ask for her help."[58]

The demand of Gandhiji read in the light of these statements could not be described as extreme. Yet Irwin was unable to give the assurance required, and whatever his predilections regarding India's future, instead of removing doubts he strengthened them. The door to negotiations was closed not by Gandhiji but by the great negative which the Government offered to the moderate concept of Gandhiji's Dominion Status.

Gandhiji has been blamed for the contretemps which is said to have brought about the loss of an opportunity for settlement through negotiations. Sapru, Patel and Jinnah who were the promoters of this interview felt disappointed. The accusation is unfounded. Irwin entered into the interview with mental reservations. He told Wedgwood Benn, "I am not disposed to go all lengths to meet people who seem to be behaving with utter unreason." He thought the Congress leaders were quite impossible. At the end of the interview he observed, there was obviously no common ground between himself and Gandhi.

The fact is Government would not yield on the question of India's political advance. It insisted that not the Indian people but the British Parliament should have the decisive voice in determining the issue. Gandhiji could not with self-respect accept this position. If Sapru, Jinnah and Patel did not approve of the attitude of Gandhiji it was unfortunate, but it did not imply they were right.

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[57] Gandhi, M. K., *Young India*, November 14, 1929.
[58] Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *Viscount Halifax, A Biography*, p. 233.

After the passage of the resolution on independence Gandhiji wrote :

"For the Congress, Dominion Status means complete independence plus voluntary partnership with Britain. ... Complete independence of the Congress is no menace to a single legitimate foreign interest or the presence of a single Englishman who will live as a friend willing to submit to the rules applicable to the whole of Independent India."[59]

His reply to the charge that he was responsible for the breakdown of negotiations with Irwin was that he was bound by the Calcutta Congress instructions and by the Delhi manifesto. The central point of both was the immediate establishment of Dominion Status. It was of no use to indulge in diplomatic language which meant one thing to India and quite another to England. "The British people must realise that the Empire is to come to an end." Gandhiji knew that "this realisation would not come unless we in India have generated power within to enforce our will."[60]

Irwin's remark at the end of the interview with Gandhiji and other leaders gave expression to the inherent contradiction of imperial rule, for in the last analysis there could be no compromise between the dominion of an alien race and the aspiration for independence of a subject nation. The contradiction which lay partly hidden but which had flashed into the open from time to time had at last come out into the light. The historic drama now moved towards denouement.

Lahore witnessed the enactment of a memorable scene. In a vast pandal where more than 15,000 people had assembled the session of the Congress commenced in an atmosphere tense with grim expectancy and dauntless resolution. At 5 o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday, the 29th of December, the handsome, youthful, impetuous and intrepid President, Jawaharlal Nehru, entered the pandal and ascended the rostrum. In a short vibrant address he declared the goal of India to be complete independence, in other words, "complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism". But for him independence did not mean exclusiveness and isolation, but having attained freedom to attempt at world cooperation and federation. He warned, "the embrace of the British Empire is a dangerous thing. It is not and cannot be the life-giving embrace of affection freely given and returned. And if it is not that, it will be what it has been in the past, the embrace of death."[61]

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[59] Gandhi, M. K., *Young India*, January 9, 1930.

[60] Gandhi, M. K., "To the Indian Critics", *Young India*, January 23, 1930.

[61] Nehru, Jawaharlal, Presidential Address, 44th session of the Indian National Congress, Lahore, December 29, 1929. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1929, Vol. II, p. 292.

On the last day of the year, in pursuance of the decision adopted at the Calcutta session, December 1928, Gandhiji moved the following resolution :

"The Congress declares that the word 'Swaraj' in Article 1 of the Congress Constitution shall mean Complete Independence and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's Report to have lapsed and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India. ... This Congress resolves upon complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and committees constituted by the Government (including the Round Table Conference). ... The Congress appeals to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress and authorizes the All-India Congress Committee, wherever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes."[62]

Exactly at midnight as the hour struck twelve, the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority of votes. The old year was rung out, the new welcomed in. The tricolour flag of independent India was unfurled and a tremendous roar of '*Inqilab Zindabad*' (Long live revolution) went up from the immense throng and rent the heavens.

A new day was dawning in the history of India as the glow of the rising sun reddened the sky. At last, the hesitations and uncertainties were over. The goal was clear and though the path might be strewn with pits and snares, the direction was no longer in doubt.

VII. CONSTITUTION-MAKING

The national leaders of most parties representing the overwhelming majority of politically conscious India had repudiated the authority of the British Parliament to determine the future of India. The Indian National Congress, the Liberal Federation, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Khilafat Conference and several other parties had refused to recognise and to cooperate with the Statutory Commission appointed by Parliament to conduct an enquiry into Indian political affairs and to advise Parliament on constitutional changes in the country.

Those who decided to welcome the Commission were either splinter groups like the section of the Muslim League led by Muhammad Shafi or representatives of factional interests—Europeans, Anglo-Indians, non-Brahmins, Depressed Classes, etc.

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[62] The Indian National Congress, 44th Session, December 31, 1929. Resolution No. 4. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

Concerning the faction of the League organised and convened by Muhammad Shafi at Lahore in December 1928, a Muslim writer observes, "Very soon it became clear that the intention for holding a separate session in Lahore was to lend support to Simon Commission and to strengthen the hands of Imperialism in India, for otherwise they (the sponsors) had no chance of proving their loyalty and fidelity to the British."[63]

The opposition to the Statutory Commission had made it incumbent upon the Indian leaders to discharge the duty of demonstrating that India was not only united in negating what it disapproved, but also in preparing a constitution for India with the agreement of its principal communities.

This was indeed an enterprise of extraordinary complexities. By 1927 it was clear that the Indians were of one mind so far as the transfer of power from Britain to India was concerned, for whether they gave it the name of Dominion Status or independence or Swaraj in substance they indicated the same objective. There was also general agreement that this transfer should, with some necessary limitations, take place immediately.

The British Government held that although Dominion Status was the goal of political development it could not be reached immediately, but in its own good time. It was impossible to prejudge the speed of advance. The number of stages and the amount of transfer of power at each stage must be left to the decision of Parliament. In its endeavour to defeat the purpose of the Nationalists—Hindu and Muslim, the Government depended on the Muslims, the Princes, and the Depressed Classes. Every effort was made to rally them to the side of Government and detach them from the nationalist cause.

At this time it was taken for granted that a self-governing India must be one and united India. The British rulers laid utmost emphasis that national unity was the precondition of self-government. Obviously, they fully believed that the unity could not be achieved and consequently self-government must remain ever in abeyance.

From Morley to Birkenhead and Peel all British Secretaries of State harped upon the Hindu-Muslim differences and made them the stumbling block on the road to responsible government. The Viceroys of the period repeated the same story parrotwise. Montagu highlighted the communal discord as "the difficulty that outweighs all others"[64] Lloyd George averred, "The talk about India as a unit, as if it were one people is to display an ignorance of the elementary facts

[63] Noman, Muhammad, *Muslim India* (Rise and Growth of the All-India Muslim League), p. 264.

[64] Quoted from Coupland, R., *The Indian Problem*, Part I, p. 56.

of the case." According to him "in India there are at least 30 or 40" nationalities.[65]

Birkenhead who challenged Indians in his speech in the House of Lords on November 24, 1927, to produce their own draft of the constitution, wrote to the Viceroy on January 5, 1928 :

"I am entirely in favour as you will perhaps have inferred from my speeches, of inciting the malcontents to produce their own proposals, for, in the first instance, I believe them quite incapable of surmounting the constitutional and constructive difficulties involved, and, in the second, if these were overcome, I believe that a unity which can only survive in an atmosphere of generalisation would disappear at once."[66]

Theodore Morison, once Principal of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh, and at the time a member of the Secretary of State's Council opined :

"The Hindus and Muslims who inhabit one village, one town, or one district belong to two separate nations more distinct and spiritually farther as under than two European nations."[67]

Irwin chose to advise the Hindus and Muslims to make up their quarrels in his speeches at the Chelmsford Club on 17th July 1926, and in the legislature in September 1927. He did not realise that the exhortations coming from the highest authority in Government would have the effect of enhancing the importance of the problem especially when the Government wanted to leave the solution to the communities themselves. Regarding the second speech he wrote to the Secretary of State :

"I am not sanguine that it will do any direct good; but I feel pretty certain that it will be indirectly useful as serving to convince people, that we do genuinely desire to help them over the biggest bunker that they have got to face, and are willing to take risks to give effect to our desire. If, as one must foresee is probable, the Commission ultimately says that no great extension of self-government is possible in the fact of the present communal discords, I think the unpleasant impact of this unpalatable truth will be somewhat softened in the minds of reasonable people if they have been previously brought to believe in the genuine desire of Government to help in this field."[68]

He informed Birkenhead in another letter : "It must be recognised that, vocal as they are, the Indian political parties do not as yet represent India."[69] The land interest and the Depressed Classes were

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[65] Lloyd George, D., November 7, 1929. *H. C. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 321, col. 1315.

[66] *Irwin Papers* : The Earl of Birkenhead to Viceroy, January 5, 1928.

[67] Theodore Morison, Muhammedan Movements, Chapter V, in Cumming, Sir John, (ed.) *Political India* (S. Chand & Co., 1968 Reprint), p. 103.

[68] *Irwin Papers* : Viceroy to Lord Birkenhead, August 2, 1927.

inarticulate. So far as the Muslims were concerned, he pointed out, "They are, after all, our best friends, and however impartial it may be our duty to be, we are not colled upon to throw over our friends for new allies whose friendship has been a very uncertain quantity."[70]

Muslims were friends of the British rule and the other community uncertain—euphemism for unfriendly; it followed, "It is clear, therefore, I think that if Muslim feelings are to be respected, no alteration in the existing system is possible at present."[71]

In pursuance of the standing policy of retaining the friendship of the Muslims and immediately in order to save the Statutory Commission from the threat of boycott, the officials speeded up their efforts. Irwin asked Birkenhead to approach the Muslim leaders in England, like the Aga Khan, to exert themselves to persuade the Indian Muslims. Malcolm Hailey, a member of the Executive Council, promised to look after the Indian Muslim leaders. Other members of the Executive Council and the Governments of the provinces gave assurances about the good behaviour of the Muslims.

Birkenhead encouraged the Viceroy in his policy. He wrote :

"I should advise Simon to see at all stages important people who are not boycotting the Commission, particu'arly Moslems and the Depressed Classes. I should widely advertise his interviews with representative Moslems. The whole policy now is obvious. It is to terrify the immense Hindu population by the apprehension that the Commission is being got hold of by the Moslems and may present a report altogether destructive of the Hindu position, thereby securing a solid Moslem support and leaving Jinnah high and dry."[72]

Whether the majority of the Muslims walked into the spider's parlour or not, as claimed by Irwin, it was most creditable on the part of Jinnah that he flatly refused to do so. He declared, "Simon Commission is the butchery of our soul."[73]

The process of fashioning the Swaraj Constitution has to be examined in the background of active British scepticism and even hostility. It was considered obvious that the foundation of independence must rest on Hindu-Muslim agreement. Gandhiji and Jinnah both regarded unity and independence the obverse and reverse of the same coin.

Now the Hindu-Muslim problem had two distinct aspects. Its one aspect was religious and social or cultural, the other political. The religious and social differences were original, but through ages of living

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69 *Ibid.*, May 26, 1927.
70 *Ibid.*, April 3, 1927.
71 *Ibid.*, May 11, 1927.
72 *Ibid.*, Birkenhead to Viceroy, February 9, 1928.
73 Noman, Muhammad, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

together a *modus vivendi* had been evolved and the communities had learnt to live together. They had influenced one another and borrowed many elements of culture, including religious. It remained, however, true that there was no social fusion, the two did not become members of one social organisation. It is also a fact of history that from time to time their differences accentuated by some local causes erupted into violence. But there is no evidence of countrywide tension and conflict.

The political differences as acknowledged by even British officials were the creation of British rule, for it remains an incontrovertible fact proved by the statements of the highest officials of Government.

Birkenhead speaking in the House of Lords in reply to Olivier's demand for information on Indian affairs stated : "It would, therefore, in my judgement, be untrue, for the reasons I have given, to deny all connection between the reforms and the present state of tension between Hindu and Moslem."[74]

Irwin's analysis of the problem was : "The antagonism which some members or sections of communities had recently displayed appeared, to some extent, to be based not so much on traditional loyalty to any creed as on new assertions of abstract rights, which it is sought to invest with the sanctity of ancient principles. This tendency has been more marked in the recent troubles than at any previous period in the British administration."[75]

Why the British felt apologetic about acknowledging it openly is not surprising. They desired to project the image of a rule inspired not with selfish interests but with benevolent motives—the reform and uplift of a hopelessly disintegrated, decrepit, corrupt people by the instrumentality of a vigorous, enlightened and honest government, the introduction of a superior civilization in a backward country.

The British needed no apology, for the stability of a state is supported on two pillars—physical force and moral prestige. Force is relative to need, its quantum depends upon the magnitude of the opposition force. In international affairs every government seeks to prevent the establishment of a rival force capable of overwhelming it : that is the principle of balance of power. The whole history of modern Europe turns round the endeavours of Britain to maintain the balance of power, that is, to circumvent the menace of any rival European power or combination of powers—France in the 18th and 19th centuries, Germany and Russia in the 20th century.

The same policy of countervailing Hindus against Muslims was

[74] Birkenhead's speech, July 28, 1926. *H. L. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 65, col. 306.

[75] Viceroy's speech to the Legislature at Simla on August 17, 1926. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1926, Vol. II, pp. 202-3.

naturally adopted in imperial affairs in order to prevent the one or the other community from acquiring such influence as might prove dangerous to the British rule.

But naked force cannot assure permanence; it has to be kept in the background as the ultimate sanction. The government has ordinarily to function on its moral prestige, it has to acquire the acquiescence of most of its subjects and the positive assent of as many groups as possible, especially among the elite.

There was thus an inevitable conflict between the rulers desirous of maintaining the integrity of the Empire and safeguarding its economic and political interests, and the ruled struggling for the transference of authority. Independence was necessary for the promotion of the material and moral reconstruction and advancement of the country and for the assertion and vindication of national self-respect.

Unfortunately there was lack of clear thinking on the problems of unity and liberty. The quarrels in which the Hindus and the Muslims were involved were, as stated above, religious and social to begin with, but in the last quarter of the nineteenth century they were acquiring political hues. By then both the Hindus and the Muslims were emerging from social multiplicity to communal unity, with overtones of nationality consciousness. During the first decade of the twentieth century both communal and national consciousness had deepened and broadened. At this stage the concept of territorial society which is the basis of nationalism was confounded with that of community of religion. Now, India was no longer divided into 30 or 40 nationalities as Lloyd George believed, but in two communities both developing a sense of attachment to a definite geographical region. For the Hindus this region was the entire subcontinent of India, they had no interest in any country beyond India's border, by choice or by tradition. Their nationalism and patriotism was limited to the confines of India. Hence for them patriotism was love of the land in which the Hindus lived. Nationalism and Hinduism were confused.

So far as the Muslims were concerned, their religious affiliations were worldwide. The Muslim *millat* (religious society) is scattered over many countries, in the same way as the Christian society. But the Muslims inhabiting defined geographical regions all the world over had been developing territorial nationalism recently and therefore they still retained some attachment to the world community. For them at this stage love of Islam came first and patriotism afterwards.

Since the Partition days the Indian Muslims had also become aware of a territorial home where the Muslims were the principal inhabitants; and somewhat later a similar sentiment awakened among the Muslims in the north-western parts. They discovered in the Panjab, North-Western Frontier province, Sind and Baluchistan a territorial

basis for the community. But in the Western region, apart from religion, there was no other unity. A sense of community developed, but the consciousness of a nationality was overshadowed by the concept of a religious society. Political and religious feelings were mixed up. What might have been natural and legitimate for the territorial societies of the north-west and the east was wrongly extended to the mixed minorities distributed all over India.

The inhabitants of the Eastern region constituted a legitimate nationality in their own right, but the case of the Western region was less convincing; whether they should have become independent sovereign states or remained units of a federal organisation was an open question. The followers of Islam, Christianity and other religions in the rest of India had no claim to be recognised as nationalities, they had to accept the status of minorities. What they could justly demand was their right for the protection of religion, culture and language. For all political and economic purposes they were equal to other communities without discrimination in law and administration, but without any claims for separate or special treatment.

It is interesting to note the development by which political interests intruded into matters relating to religious observances and customs and finally gained ascendancy over them. Political ideas of the modern type began to affect groups not long after the demise of medieval feudal concepts in the Revolt of 1857. In Bengal the awareness of the importance of governmental activity in relation to the people's affairs went back to an earlier period, to the times of Ram Mohan Roy, but it was after the foundation of political organisations like the Landholders' Society (founded in 1838 by Dwarkanath Tagore), the British Indian Association (founded in 1851), the Central National Mohammedan Association (founded in 1877 by Syed Amir Ali), the Mohammedan Literary Society (founded in 1863 by Nawab Abdul Latif), the Indian Association (founded in 1876 by Surendranath Banerjea) and others that politics assumed an all-India character. The culmination of the process was the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

The advent of the Congress marked a stage in the growth of nationalism as well as of communalism. For almost contemporaneously the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society were reviving Hindu religious sentiment, while individuals like Syed Ahmad Khan and Syed Amir Ali and organisations like Farangi Mahal and Nadwatul Ulama of Lucknow, the Deoband School and Muslim scholars and reformers were stimulating interest and stirring the religious feelings of the Muslims.

The political consequences soon made their appearance. In 1893 the question of cow protection raised a conflict and riots ensued. Tilak saw in them the sinister hand of governmental policy. Henceforth the

quarrels and dissensions about cow-slaughter and music before mosques which were mostly confined to the common people in the towns spilled over almost every part of the country. The politicians of the communal parties found in them opportunities of advancing their own causes.

The Partition of Bengal and the anti-partition agitation threw oil over the smouldering fire, which blazed in 1906. The British fanned it. The Acts of 1909 and 1919 gave statutory recognition to separatism.

In order to extinguish the fire many efforts were made, for both Hindus and Muslims recognised that it might lead to a holocaust. The history of these attempts has been given in previous chapters. Since 1919 Gandhiji had embarked upon an all out effort to unite the communities. The main purpose of his support to the Muslim Khilafat movement was to bring about a permanent union of the two.

He made his last great effort in 1924 when he went on a twenty-one-day fast in which he risked his life. The effort failed, because his approach was wrong. According to his bent of mind he stressed the religious and moral aspects of the problem. He was primarily interested in the masses and he saw in the riots the wrong-headedness of the common man. He was only superficially concerned with the intellectuals—their political fears and jealousies, which were not as deep-rooted or as long established as religious differences. The latter were amenable to deliberate remedial measures, while the former depended upon a revolution in attitudes and habits, individual and collective.

In May 1926, he gave expression to his despair in these words: "I have admitted my incompetence. I have admitted that I have been found wanting as a physician prescribing a cure for this malady. I do not find that either Hindus or Musulmans are ready to accept my cure and therefore I simply nowadays confine myself to a passing mention of the problem."[76]

That Gandhiji was not wholly unaware of the involvement of the intellectuals is apparent from the following:

"It is educated India which is split up into parties. I confess my incompetence to bring these parties together. Their method is not my method. I am trying to work from bottom upwards. To an onlooker it is exasperatingly a process much more difficult and complicated than the former."[77]

While in the year 1926 Gandhiji withdrew from all political activities, in the year 1927 he undertook a tour throughout India in the interest of his constructive programme—the organization of

[76] Quoted by Campbell-Johnson, Alan. *op. cit.*, p. 156.

[77] Tendulkar, D. G., *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 309.

spinning centres, and in 1928 he 'confined himself to the precincts of Sabarmati Ashram', occasionally commenting on politics in *Young India.* But during these years the country was passing through awful travail and the leaders were straining all their might to find a solution for the problem of communal harmony.

1926 had seen the bloody trail of communal violence extend across the country. There were 35 riots during the year, the worst disgraced the city of Calcutta during April, May and July. The dismal story culminated in the assassination of Swami Shraddhananda on December 23.

1927 was no better; tension between Hindus and Muslims was at its worst because of riots and the two notoriously offensive publications— *Rangila Rasul* and *Risala Vartaman.* In 1928 there was an abatement in the barbarous feud because the Hindus and Muslims joined in the boycott of the Simon Commission.

After Swami Shraddhannanda's murder, Gandhiji had confessed, "I am helpless. I have now washed my hands. But I am a believer in God.... Something within me tells me that Hindu-Moslem unity will come sooner than we might care to hope, that God will one day force it on us in spite of ourselves. That is why I said that it has passed into the hands of God."[78]

It is a pity Gandhiji's counsel was not available during these critical years for a cause which he held so dear. But the task could not wait, for there was no escape from the inexorable pressure of events.

The conference which met to consider measures for reducing communal discord devoted largely its attention to the religious and social causes, for example, cow sacrifice, music before mosques, conversion, communal organization, etc. But so far as political questions were concerned no serious effort was made after 1916 to resolve the problem of communal representation in elective bodies— assembly, provincial councils, local government boards, university senates, etc., and in the services—government and semi-government.

On these questions the Congress and the League formulated their own decisions without coming together as they had done at Lucknow. Sporadic efforts were, however, made from time to time. The most noteworthy among them was the Pact which C. R. Das evolved, but which was rejected by the Congress at Cocanada.

VIII. Efforts for Communal Understanding

The extremely alarming situation which the riots had created on the one hand, and the great urgency felt in the nationalist quarters

[78] Fischer, Louis, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi,* p. 270.

for expediting the transfer of power on the other, impelled the political parties to pay serious attention to the problem. The speech of Birkenhead in Parliament challenging Indian leaders to frame their own constitution and averring that wise men were not slaves of dates was clear invitation for immediate action. Irwin's exhortations added urgency to the matter.

At the Gauhati session of the Congress in December 1926, a resolution was adopted, calling upon the Working Committee to take immediate steps in consultation with Hindu and Musalman leaders to devise measures for the removal of the present deplorable differences between Hindus and Musalmans.

Srinivasa Iyengar, the President of the Congress for the year 1927 immediately after the session began to probe the possibilities of convening a conference of various parties. During the Delhi session of the legislature he carried on discussions separately with the Hindu and Muslim leaders. But the prospects appeared unpropitious. To some the situation appeared hopeless. How intractable it was became exposed when Sankaran Nair on March 16, 1927 moved a resolution in the Council of State recommending to the Government that no further step towards responsible government be taken until Hindus and Mohammedans agreed to dispense with separate electorates.

The resolution pricked the conscience of all parties and the nationalists, and the Hindu and Muslim communalists were stirred into immediate action. Jinnah called the Muslim leaders and held discussions on the 18th of March and then decided to summon a meeting of the Mus'im leaders.

The meeting took place at Delhi on March 20. About 30 prominent Muslims representing different views attended—progressive leaders like Jinnah, Raja of Mahmudabad, Ansari, Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Yaqub and conservatives like Muhammad Shafi, Abdul Qaiyum, Ghazanfar Ali Khan. Jinnah occupied the chair.

After prolonged discussions the meeting adopted the following resolution:

"Muslims should accept a settlement on the basis of the following proposals, so far as representation in the various legislatures in any future scheme of constitution is concerned :

1. Sind should be separated from Bombay and constituted into a separate province.

2. Reforms should be introduced in the N.W.F. Province and in Baluchistan on the same footing as in any other province.

In that case, Muslims are prepared to accept a joint electorate in all Provinces so constituted, and are further willing to make to Hindu minorities in Sind, Baluchistan and the N.W.F. Province the same

concessions that Hindu majorities in other provinces are prepared to make to Muslim minorities.

In the Panjab and Bengal the proportion of representation shall be in accordance with the population.

In the Central Legislature, Muslim representation shall not be less than a third, and that also, by a mixed electorate."

Jinnah's bold and patriotic initiative had at last interjected a ray of light into the encircling gloom. The way seemed to be opened to communal understanding and Swaraj. The Congress Working Committee on the very next day (21st March) met, recorded its satisfaction on the Delhi proposals and appointed a sub-committee to discuss details. The Hindu members of the Central Legislature under the chairmanship of Malaviya expressed approval of the principle of joint electorates with reservation of seats on the basis of population, and safeguards for the protection of religious rights, but postponed consideration on the problem of provinces.

The comment of *Hindustan Times,* conducted by Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, was disparaging and captious. Therefore Jinnah issued a statement explaining the implications of the proposal, and pointed out that all its parts were interdependent, though the concessions to the minorities were open to discussion. The object of the scheme was to give a real sense of confidence and security to the minorities, by creating equipoise between the communities.

The proposals met with a mixed reception from both communities. But the Congress Working Committee which met on May 15, at Bombay, accepted on the whole the Delhi proposals. The All-India Congress Committee adopted the recommendations of the Working Committee.

Meanwhile other parties also took cognisance of the Delhi Muslim scheme. Shaukat Ali on behalf of the Khilafat Committee invited Moonje, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, to a conference of the representatives of the two bodies to discuss the communal problem. A unity conference was held at Simla on August 30, but after many contentious debates from September 16 to 22 on cow-sacrifice and music before mosque, the conference adjourned and never met afterwards.

Another attempt was made by Srinivasa Iyengar who called a unity conference at Calcutta on October 27 and 28. The results of the conference were more cheering. It approved agreed resolutions on conversions from one faith to another, on cow sacrifice, and on the music question. The conference proved that the religio-social differences were capable of adjustment. But neither the Simla nor the Calcutta conference applied its mind to the political problem.

This came up before the Congress and League annual conferences in December. Both were anxious to achieve a satisfactory solution, as

the announcement of the appointment of the Statutory Commission on November 8 had imparted urgency to the political question.

The Congress session commenced on December 26, 1927 under the presidentship of Ansari. Gandhiji whose attendance was doubtful till the last joined, although he did not actively participate in the proceedings. The President drew attention to the two distinct groups of communal differences, political and religious, and narrated the history of efforts made to solve them.

The Congress passed among others three important resolutions—one on the Swaraj Constitution, the second on the boycott of the Statutory Commission and the third on Hindu-Muslim unity. The third resolution was moved by Sarojini Naidu whose dedication to the cause of unity was well known, and second by Abul Kalam Azad, an equally staunch upholder of communal harmony. In the debate Malaviya, Muhammad Ali and Srinivasa Iyengar took prominent part. Motilal Nehru was not in the country and Jawaharlal showed no interest in the discussion. After a long debate the motion confirming the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, with some minor amendments, was carried unanimously; the house expressed its approval and joy by standing up and enthusiastically cheering and applauding the decision.

The resolution on the Swaraj Constitution authorized the Working Committee to draft a Swaraj constitution for India in consultation with other political organizations.

The Muslim politicians had split over the proposals of the Delhi meeting. There was a tussle between them for obtaining control over the League. At one meeting of the Council of the League (November 20) it was decided that the League should meet at Lahore, but at the next meeting (December 11) the resolution was rescinded and Calcutta was fixed as the venue for the League session. The members of the Council who favoured Lahore withdrew from the Council meeting. The result was that two conferences were held in the name of the Muslim League.

At the Calcutta session Muhammad Yaqub presided, as Muhammad Shafi who had been nominated by the League Council, refused. The important resolutions of the meeting were, one on the boycott of the Simon Commisssion moved by Ali Imam, and the other on the confirmation of the Delhi meeting's proposal moved by Barkat Ali and supported by Jinnah. Mrs. Annie Besant, Abul Kalam Azad and Mrs. Naidu who attended the League session expressed their approval. Malaviya made an impassioned appeal for unity. The League appointed a committee to confer with the Congress Working Committee for drafting a constitution.

The Lahore meeting declared the Delhi proposals unacceptable, and resolved to cooperate with the Simon Commission.

The All-India Liberal Federation held its annual session at Bombay with Tej Bahadur Sapru in the chair on December 27 and 28. It resolved (1) to boycott the Statutory Commission, (2) to constitute a committee with Sapru as chairman to formulate a scheme of responsible government in cooperation with committees of other political bodies, and (3) to approve generally the Muslim proposal for communal settlement.

The Hindu Mahasabha met at Madras under Malaviya's presidentship on 29 December. It expressed the opinion that a constitution for India's self-government should be drafted and laid down certain guiding principles.

Political India had expressed through the resolutions of these bodies unequivocally a desire to prepare its own constitution for self-government. The Congress Working Committee, the agent of the most influential political organisation, naturally took the lead, as the way seemed to have been cleared by the Delhi Muslim meeting of March 27, 1927.

The acceptance of joint electorates for provincial and central legislatures by the Muslim League had removed a great hurdle in the way. But the acceptance of the Muslim community was not unanimous and it was hedged with conditions which the Hindu communal parties found inadmissible. The Hindu Mahasabha which chose to believe that India was a homogeneous nation wanted unitary government, uniform franchise and majority rule. According to its view the Indian minorities were religious groups and, therefore, though their religious rights might be safeguarded, no political or administrative rights need be guaranteed. The Muslims, on the other hand, considered themselves a nationality with distinct religion, culture and traditions, and therefore a distinct individuality, which demanded recognition in constitutional and administrative arrangements. From this it followed that the Indian Government ought to be federal in character and the Muslim share in legislative, executive and administrative organs of government ought to be clearly provided in the constitution; at the same time their religious and cultural rights should be protected.

March of the insistence on both sides was rooted in mutual distrust and fear. The Hindu fears found expression in the speeches and writings of the Hindu leaders. For instance, Lajpat Rai, one of the most enlightened, widely travelled, liberal-minded, and courageous leader, who was anxious to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity and realized that without such unity Swaraj was not possible, was so disheartened on account of the communal riots and so alarmed by some foolish pronouncements of certain Muslim leaders that not only

did he give up the Swaraj Party and disapprove of Gandhiji's movement, but actually identified himself with the Hindu Mahasabha and promoted its militant programme of *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan.*

In a letter which he wrote to C. R. Das in 1925 he delivered himself of these sentiments :

"I have devoted most of my time during the last six months to the study of Muslim history and Muslim law and I am inclined to think it (Hindu-Muslim unity) may be neither possible nor practicable. Assuming and admitting the sincerity of the Mohammedan leaders in the non-cooperation movement, I think their religion provides an effective bar to anything of the kind. . . . What is the remedy? I am not afraid of seven crores of Indian Musalmans but seven crores plus the armed hosts of Afghanistan and Central Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Turkey will be irresistible. I do honestly and sincerely believe in the necessity and desirability of Hindu-Muslim unity; I am also fully prepared to trust the Muslim leaders, but what about the injunctions of the Quran and *Hadis*?"[79]

Lajpat Rai's solution was given in these words : "My suggestion is that the Punjab should be partitioned into two provinces, the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority to be Muslim-governed province, and the Eastern Punjab with a large Hindu-Sikh majority to be non-Muslim governed province. . . . I will not make the same suggestion in their (Bengalis) case, but if Bengal is prepared to accept Mr. Das's Pact, I have nothing to say. . . . Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States : (1) the Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier, (2) Western Punjab, (3) Sind, and (4) Eastern Bengal."[80]

The partition of India was not the product of the fertile imagination of Muslim undergraduates of the Cambridge University, nor even poet Iqbal's fancy, but the brain-child of a hypersensitive Hindu stalwart.

The Muslims were not behind the Hindus in conjuring up bogeys to frighten themselves. Most of them believed that the Hindu majority in the Indian population would simply overwhelm the Muslims in all matters—population, culture, religion and rank, leaving no trace of name and sign of Islam in the country. Others were certain that Hindus would drive Muslim men, women and children out of India. Abdur Rahim, President of the Muslim League, said :

"Some of the Hindu leaders had spoken publicly of driving out

[79] *The People* (Lajpat Rai Number), April 13, 1929. Letter to C. R. Das shortly before the Gaya Congress of 1925. (Received through the courtesy of Mr. V. C. Joshi of the Nehru Museum and Library, New Delhi).

[80] Joshi, V. C. (ed.), *Lala Lajpat Rai : Speeches and Writings*, Vol. II. pp. 212-13.

Muslims from India as Spaniards expelled Moors from Spain."[81]

Obviously both were suffering from paranoiac delusions. The malady could only be treated by psychic treatment given by a skiful physician. Gandhiji, a psychiatrist of the human souls, had given powerful suggestions to overcome fear but his diagnosis of the communal disease was defective and when his treatment proved unavailing, he lost heart and threw up the sponge.

IX. Nehru Committee Report

At the beginning of 1928, it looked as if the malady was abating. In compliance with the resolution of the Madras Congress, the Working Committee called a meeting of the different political parties at Delhi on February 12, 1928. The Conference defined the objective of the constitution to be the establishment of full responsible government and appointed a committee to work out some important details of the constitution.

The conference again met at Bombay on May 19, and resolved that in view of the differences between the proposals of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, it was necessary to determine the principles of the constitution before actually drafting the constitution. For this purpose a committee consisting of Motilal Nehru as chairman, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Ali Imam, Pradhan, Shuaib Qureshi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Aney, Jayakar, N. M. Joshi and Mangal Singh as members was appointed to report. Jayakar declined to act.

The Committee after taking advice from a number of eminent persons and representatives of communal bodies and holding 25 sittings in the months of June and July presented its report to the All-Parties Conference held at Lucknow from August 28. The Conference set its seal of approval on the Report.

Then the Report with some amendments was considered by the All-India Congress Committee on November 4 and 5, and accepted.

In order to give the recommendations of the Report the status of the national demand it was necessary to obtain the endorsement of the All-Parties Conference, the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress.

The All-Parties Convention was held on December 22, 1928 at Calcutta and continued its sittings till January 1, 1929. The Convention represented political India in miniature. Here were gathered together the most prominent leaders of the parties, most distinguished

[81] Sir Abdur Rahim, Presidential Address to the All-India Muslim League, Aligarh, December 31, 1925, *The Indian Annual Register*, 1925, Vol. II, p. 356.

public men of India—Gandhi, Jinnah, Motilal Nehru, Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Abul Kalam Azad, Mrs. Annie Besant, Ali Imam and others. The spirit of hope, not unmixed with fear, brooded over the meeting, for the destiny of more than three hundred million human beings was in the balance.

Dr. Ansari presided. Motilal Nehru presented the Report of the Committee which had been appointed by the All-Parties Conference at Bombay.

The principal recommendations of the Report were:[82]

"(a) The political status of India shall be the same as that of the British Dominions like Canada, South Africa, Australia and the Irish Free State.

(b) The fundamental rights shall be provided in the Constitution, among them shall be the freedom of conscience, of profession and practice of religion.

(c) The Lower House in the Central Legislature and the provincial legislatures shall consist of members elected by joint and mixed electorates, but there shall be reservation of seats for the Muslims in the Central Legislature and the provincial legislatures where they are in a minority and similarly reservation for Hindus in the North-West Frontier Province.

(d) There will be no reservation for the Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal.

(e) Reservation of seats shall be on the basis of population and for a fixed period. Communities whose seats are reserved shall have the right to contest for additional seats.

(f) Every person of either sex who has attained the age of 21 and is not disqualified by law shall be entitled to vote, both for the Central and provincial legislatures.

(g) The Provinces of Sind and Karnataka shall be separate. Any further reorganisation of provinces shall be on linguistic basis.

(h) The list of subjects on which the Central and provincial governments shall exercise authority will be provided in schedules."

A number of important articles of the draft constitution were discussed for four days, and then on the 28th December Jinnah made a statement regarding the attitude of the Muslim League which had met in Calcutta and appointed delegates for participation in the Committee. He raised a number of points on which he urged reconsideration and modification. They were as follows:

(1) In the Central Legislature the Muslims shall have one-third of the total seats.

All-Parties Conference, pp. 122-24.

[82] *Nehru Committee Report* or *Report of the Committee appointed by the*

(2) In the event of adult suffrage not being established, the Panjab and Bengal should have seats reserved for the Muslims on the population basis.

(3) The residuary powers should be vested in the provinces.

(4) The separation of Sind should not be postponed till the new constitution came into force.

(5) The amendment of the constitution should not be effected without a four-fifths majority of either house separately and of both houses voting jointly.

Sapru entered a strong plea in support of the proposal of reserving 33 1/3 per cent seats in the Central Legislature for the Muslims. He considered it the crucial matter and appealed to the Convention to accept Jinnah's request for the sake of complete communal harmony on broad principles, otherwise it was impossible for India to achieve Dominion Status, not to speak of independence. Jayakar as a representative of the Hindu Mahasabha vehemently opposed Jinnah's proposals. He questioned Jinnah's status as a representative of the Muslims, and warned that if the Convention made a departure from the Report, his party (the Hindu Mahasabha) would back out of the pact.

Jinnah's amendment was put to vote and lost.

Gandhiji who had taken no part in the deliberations of the Convention wound up the proceedings by moving its adjournment *sine die*. In his speech he made no reference to the failure of the main purpose of the All-India Unity Conference, and expressed his satisfaction with the acceptance of the recommendations of the Nehru Committee Report which, according to him, indicated the will of the nation regarding the principles of the constitution.

Immediately after, at the meeting of the Indian National Congress, Gandhiji presented the resolution which welcomed the recommendations of the Nehru Committee as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems, and proposed its approval by the Congress as it represented the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country.

The resolution evoked a lively debate concerning the goal of India —Dominion Status or Independence. But no reference was made to the demand of the Muslim League in the Convention. It is surprising that Gandhiji did not give weight to the opposition of the Muslim League voiced by Jinnah and Muhammad Ali as destructive of the claim to agreement of the important parties.

As the Congress decision on the Report led to serious consequences which ought to have been foreseen it is necessary to review the causes and effects of the attitudes of the different parties.

The All-Parties Conference was convened in response to the desire

of the political parties—the Congress and the Muslim League being foremost, to meet the challenge of Birkenhead, the Secretary of State, and to forestall the enquiry of the Statutory Commission. The Conference was made possible by the offer of the Muslim leaders of the Delhi proposals, to give up separate electorates on certain specific conditions. Jinnah who had been a powerful and consistent advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity was entirely responsible for this change in the attitude of the community which had zealously cherished separate representation as the real safeguard of the Muslims for the last 23 years. He incurred the displeasure of a large section of the Muslims led by Muhammad Shafi and Aga Khan, earned the odium of splitting the Muslim League, and invited the resentment of Birkenhead and Irwin who attributed to him unworthy motives and proposed to leave him high and dry.

It was a great misfortune that the All-Parties Conference was deprived of the assistance of both Gandhiji and Jinnah when the political and communal problems were taken up for consideration. Gandhiji had retired from active politics and Jinnah was away from the country from May 5 to October 26, 1928. The representatives of the Muslim point of view on the Nehru Committee were Ali Imam and Shuaib Qureshi. The first was unable to exert much influence on the decisions as he was absent due to illness. He signed the Report because at that stage he could hardly do otherwise. Shuaib Qureshi was too young to command the prestige necessary to persuade the members. He did fight for the reservation of one-third of seats in the Central Legislature for the Muslims, but without avail.

Of the points on which amendments were moved by Jinnah in the Convention this was of the greatest importance. It is difficult to appreciate the arguments used for turning it down. They really boil down to two. Firstly that in the responsible form of government reservation of seats in the legislatures on the basis of population percentages is contrary to the principle of pure democracy. Two considerations can be urged against this. One, that the Nehru Committee had itself departed from this principle in reserving seats for the Muslims in provinces with non-Muslim majorities and for the Hindus in Muslim majority provinces of N.W.F.P. and Sind. In addition the minorities were given the right to contest and occupy additional seats. In the case of the Central Legislature, too, the principle of reservation on the basis of population was recognised. These cnocessions were a breach of the idea of pure democracy.

The second and more fundamental consideration was the question of the nature of Indian democracy. Was the character of the demos (nation) unitary or federal?

Both India's past history and facts of the life of contemporary

India loudly proclaimed the denial of the existence of a unitary and homogeneous people inhabiting the land. It followed that India's constitution should correspond with realities and not with imaginary idealistic conditions.

The objective before the All-Parties Conference, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League was the attainment of independence. The unity of the two main communities was the necessary pre-condition for achieving the objective. The principles of political science were subsidiary means to reach the end. In defeating the proposal of Jinnah more importance was attached to the means than to the end.

After all, as Sapru pointed out, heavens would not have fallen if six or seven per cent more seats had been conceded. Between 27 per cent their actual percentage and 33 1/3 per cent demanded, the difference was so meagre, that apart from the most unforeseen exceptional contingencies, it could hardly affect the normal course of affairs.

Apparently no one realized that there was no likelihood of the organisation of solid blocs of members on communal lines in self-governing India. The experience of the legislatures under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms had shown its impracticability. Thus both the Muslim League's insistence on one-third and the Congress' refusal were irrelevant. Out of consideration for the feelings of the minority, which in every country is rightly or wrongly suspicious of the majority, the Congress representing the majority should have given in and thereby gained the goodwill of the section of the Muslims who followed the enlightened lead of Jinnah.

The immediate effect of the Congress resolution was frustration and embitterment of the two important Muslim leaders—Muhammad Ali who had loyally followed Gandhiji during the non-cooperation movement and who had influence over the Ulama, and Jinnah who was an ardent supporter of Gandhiji's programme of communal harmony, and an able, independent and fearless critic of Government who was admired by a large number of progressive Musalmans.

It is reported that after Jinnah had lost his amendments in the Convention, he felt deeply exasperated and resentful; he remarked to a friend, "This is the parting of ways." Muhammad Ali exclaimed; "Between us (Muslims) and them (the Congress) there is an unbridgeable gulf now."

The rift created in 1928 continued to widen. The rulers of India were well satisfied with the developments. Irwin informed Birkenhead in October 1928 : "The Moslems who dissent from the Nehru Report are hoping to organise a large meeting to ventilate their point of view. I receive constant indication of how strongly this point of view is held by the overwhelming majority and I think that the All-

Parties Report people have really played their cards in the two tricks that it was vital to them to win, namely, the Muslims and the Princes, with quite incredible gaucherie."[83]

Peel who had succeeded Wedgwood Benn as the Secretary of State for India, in his anxiety to conciliate the Muslims, advised Irwin, "A little more nursing of the Muslim party, it is suggested, would give a much more stable element of support to Government in the Assembly."[84]

Irwin in reply assured Peel, "The idea that Moslems generally have any sort of feeling of dissatisfaction can, I am sure, be dismissed from your mind.... When it is a case of Moslems competing with Hindus, we do our best to hold the balance even."[85]

In spite of Gandhiji's satisfaction, the Nehru Report proved still born, and just after the lapse of a year it was consigned to the waters of the river Ravi. Meanwhile Gandhiji set to prepare himself for the struggle which, in terms of the Calcutta Congress resolution, would ensue if the British people did not accept the Nehru Report before December 31, 1929.

After the hectic activity of 1928, there was a lull before the breaking of the storm at the end of 1929. The year was spent by Gandhiji in touring through northern India and Burma for propagating the boycott of British cloth, collecting funds for Lajpat Rai Memorial, removal of untouchability, and organisation of Khadi work. He showed little interest in constitution-making or in healing the wounds which the decision on the communal question had caused. Even though Irwin's declaration of October 31, 1929 created a momentary interest, the speeches of the British politicians in and out of Parliament quenched it soon.

No effort was made on behalf of the Congress either to resume discussion on the Hindu-Muslim problem. 1929 was the year of elections to the legislature and Congressmen were divided in their counsels. The Swarajists and the Responsivists were engaged in the pastime of denouncing one another, till Irwin announced the postponement of elections and removed the bone of contention.

The Muslims were also paralysed by internal squabbles. Jinnah as the President of the Muslim League Council had tried to lead the League towards reapproachment with the Congress. He received a severe check at Calcutta, both from the Congress as well as a section of the League which was dominated by the Panjab. In March 1929, Jinnah made an effort to combine the Muslim sections so as to offer a united front both to Government and Congress. The attempt ended

[83] *Irwin Papers*: Viceroy to Lord Birkenhead, October 3, 1928.
[84] *Ibid.*, Secretary of State to the Governor General, March 7, 192[illegible]
[85] *Ibid.*, Irwin to the Secretary of State, March 27, 1929.

in failure; and the Muslim community was divided into a number of factions :

(1) The Shafi section which wanted to continue the traditional line of loyalty to Government and to emphasise separate electorates for Muslims.

(2) The Muslim Conference which under the guidance of Aga Khan stood for separate electorates, but desired advance towards self-government with sufficient safeguards for Muslim interests.

(3) The Jinnah section which accepted Dominion Status as the political goal of India, but laid down conditions known as the 14 points, for cooperation with the Congress.

(4) The Nationalist Muslims who accepted the Congress ideals and methods. They organised a party in July 1929 of which the prominent members were Azad, Ansari, Tasadduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani and Choudhry Khaliquzzaman.

There were a number of organisations, *e.g.*, the Jamiatul Ulama, which cooperated with the Muslim League for some years, but then finding its politics reactionary, abandoned it, and worked with the Congress throughout the struggle against the Government.

Jinnah, however, circulated the resolution which he had drafted for the acceptance of the Muslim League. Its 14 articles contained the conditions on which the Muslims desired that the future constitution should be based. The important points were :

(1) The form of the constitution should be federal, with the residuary powers vested in the provinces.

(2) The composition of all elective bodies should be such as to ensure adequate and effective representation to the minorities.

(3) The Muslim representation in the Central Legislature should not be less than one-third.

(4) No bill or resolution should be passed if three-fourth of the members of a community in the legislature object to it, on the ground that it would be injurious to their interests.

(5) Sind should be a separate province.

(6) Reforms should be introduced in N.W.F. Province and Baluchistan.

(7) An adequate share for the Muslims should be provided in the constitution, in the services and the cabinets.

The resolution further proposed the continuance of separate electorates for the present. But if Sind was separated, the N.W.F. Province and Baluchistan given reformed constitution and the seats for the Muslims in the provinces reserved in accordance with their population, the Muslims would consent to joint electorates.[86]

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[86] Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 439-43.

As ill luck would have it, this second effort of Jinnah also met with adverse fate. The session of the Muslim League which was to consider it broke up in uproar and no business was transacted. Without the official backing of the organisation the resolution had little chance of consideration from the other political organisations.

Thus the year ended without recording any progress in the solution of the question which was regarded as the *sine qua non* for independence.

X. Irwin's Search for a Solution

Simon and his colleagues were hardly prepared for the kind of treatment which they received in India. The most influential political parties completely ignored them both socially and in the political mission, which was undoubtedly frustrating, in as much as part of their work consisted in collecting the necessary information to assess the importance and value of the various schools of Indian thought. The hostile demonstrations of black flag-waving and slogans of "Simon go back" strained their temper—Simon sometimes felt the futility of his undertaking and wished to give up. He acquired a strong dislike for the nationalist leaders. Birkenhead, who met him on his return to England in April 1928, wrote to Irwin :

Simon "has conceived a deep resentment at the antics and demeanour of the Swarajists, and an absolute contempt for their political capacities".[87]

Birkenhead shared this feeling. Indeed, he found it "increasingly difficu t to take any Indian politician seriously".[88]

Six months later he insolently repeated this estimate. He observed in his letter to Irwin :

"His (Simon's) opinion of the Swarajists is, I think, at least as unfavourable as yours and mine, and his day-to-day association with his native colleagues is unlikely, I should imagine, to endear them in any marked degree. I cannot imagine any more terrible fate in the world in the present situation in India than to try to hack out a new constitution with such talkative and incompetent colleagues."[89]

Irwin was placed in an awkward position. The Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Statutory Commission entertained no friendly opinion of Indian aspirations. Their recommendations were likely to further inflame Indian hostility. He realised that he had made a

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[87] The Earl of Birkenhead—*Frederick Edwin Earl of Birkenhead, The Last Phase*, p. 257.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 260.

miscalculation in persuading a wavering Secretary of State to appoint an all-White Commission and treating India as a suitor pleading her case before a high and mighty judge. He had to salvage the wreckage for which he was responsible. It was his duty to restore the trust which the Government had forfeited by its folly.

He had been since the resolution of the Calcutta Congress (December 1928) feeling worried. His discomfiture was increased by the happenings in the Legislative Assembly in the Delhi session of 1929. The Assembly had firmly opposed the bills—the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill, which sought to confer additional powers on Government to curb political activity. There was a conflict with the President on the first bill which had been ruled out of order. Then it had adopted the motion of Motilal Nehru reiterating the national demand and rejected the budget grant for the Executive Council, which was tantamount to a censure on the Government.

In a disturbed state of mind he confided to the Secretary of State, "I am impressed with the possibility of the problem becoming even more intractable than it is at present."[90] He also consulted his Moderate friends, and became convinced that a fresh initiative was called for, which could give satisfaction on the two sore points—(1) an assurance on the goal of India's advance, (2) the removal of affront to India's self-respect by treating her on terms of inequality.

With remedial proposals in his mind he proceeded to England where he was lucky to find a new Government in office. The Conservatives had gone out, Birkenhead was replaced by Wedgwood Benn, a Labour member more progressive than Olivier.

The result of their deliberations was that an announcement was prepared which Irwin would issue on return to India and which aimed at the pacification of the Nationalists. The famous Declaration of October 31, 1929 was published in the Government Gazette.

The Declaration immediately produced the desired effect. The Indian leaders approved. But very soon they were disillusioned. The debate in Parliament revealed the real intentions of the Government presided over by that "boneless Wonder" (Churchill's phrase) whose name was Ramsay MacDonald, between whose words spoken out of office and his deeds in office there yawned a wide gulf.

Sidney Webb, now Lord Passfield, an old imperialist and labourite socialist, pushed into a tight corner by the ruthless attacks of Reading the Liberal and Birkenhead the Conservative, ruefully admitted on behalf of the Labour Government on November 5 that the term Dominion Status used in the Viceroy's declaration did not mean any change in the policy adumbrated in the Montagu declaration of 1917

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

or the Government of India Act of 1919. He further averred that the Indian policy of the Labour Party was a national policy and not a party policy. Dominion Status was the goal of India in the fulness of time, not in the immediate future.

In the House of Commons on November 7, Baldwin and Lloyd George exerted uncomfortable pressure on the Labour Government to explain the policy behind the Declaration. Wedgwood Benn in his verbose reply asserted, "the Declaration was a restatement and interpretation of the Montagu policy", and no new departure. Against the inconvenient persistence of Lloyd George in eliciting an answer to the question whether he agreed or not with the interpretation of the Swarajists of Dominion Status he took refuge in silence.

When Gandhiji and other leaders met Irwin on December 23, to clarify the position, Gandhiji with the statements of these principal parties in Parliament in his mind naturally wanted to know categorically the intentions of the Government so that he could decide his course of action. He was also greatly perturbed by the indiscriminate repression by Government, the outbreak of violence on the part of some impatient youth and the plethora of strikes among the industrial workers.

In the somewhat sombre atmosphere of the interview which followed a dastardly attack upon Irwin's life, Gandhiji asked the Viceroy pointedly whether he would give an assurance that the discussions at the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full 'Dominion Status', for the Congress had decided at Calcutta to cooperate with the British only on condition that full dominion Status was conceded. The Viceroy was unable to give the assurance and the negotiations broke down. Irwin had once burnt his fingers, he was not going to try again.

Gandhiji's companions at the interview reacted in different ways. Tej Bahadur Sapru, a constitutional lawyer, could scarcely approve of the implications of direct action. Jinnah was a consistent opponent of non-cooperation since 1920. The decision of the Calcutta Congress had greatly annoyed him and he considered Gandhiji's insistence on obtaining a commitment on Dominion Status as a unilateral demand which ignored the Muslim opinion and interests.

Irwin adopted a strange attitude. A second time his well-laid scheme had come a cropper. The first time due to his own mistakes, the second time because of the scare-mongering wordy polemics of the British political leaders. He consoled himself with philosophical reflection, by writing a memorandum in which he proved to his own satisfaction that the British offer was not different from what India asked. He mused :

"I think that Indian thought, when claiming Dominion Status,

demands that it should be secured the status, though not immediately the full rights, of membership of the family or of partnership in the business. And this is perhaps not very different from English thought."[91]

He seemed to argue the identity of potential Dominion Status with actual, which in Indian opinion was quite unacceptable. India wanted immediate transfer of power and capability to determine policy. If this was conceded in principle the details could be worked out.

Evidently Great Britain was not prepared to give this liberty, to accede to the demand of self-determination. She wanted to retain the power in her own hands and to proceed towards a distant goal by gradual stages, determining herself the speed, the interval and the quantum of transfer of authority. Birkenhead had explicitly told Irwin :

"His Majesty's Government were averse from using the phrase 'Dominion Status' to describe even the ultimate and remote goal of Indian political development, because it has been laid down that Dominion Status means, 'the right to decide their own destinies', and this right we were not prepared to accord to India at present or in any way to prejudge the question whether it should ever be accorded."[92]

Irwin was quite mistaken in thinking that the difference between the two views was negligible. If that was really so, why did Irwin not press upon his bosses to assent to the Gandhian demand ? In case of their refusal he could have resigned on this vital issue, as on lesser matters Northbrook and Curzon had resigned before him, and as he himself indicated when his Declaration was disapproved by Baldwin and others.

Gandhiji had entered into talks with the Viceroy because he did not want to miss any chance of solving a problem by means of peaceful negotiations. But he knew, "England will never make any advance till she is forced to it. British rule is no philanthropic job, it is a terribly earnest business proposition worked out from day to day with deadly precision. The coating of benevolence that is periodically given to it merely prolongs the agony."[93]

For the time being the door had been banged on the prospect of peaceful settlement. Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru carrying the immense burden of their responsibilities and oppressed with anticipation of the dreadful consequences of the coming inevitable struggle, proceeded

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[91] Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

[92] The Earl of Birkenhead, *F. E. Earl of Birkenhead, The Last Phase*, pp. 258-59.

[93] Fischer, Louis, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

from the magnificent new palace of the Governor General to Lahore to attend the fateful session of the Congress.

XI. Civil Disobedience—Salt Satyagraha

On the 29th December the Congress session opened in an atmosphere surcharged with tense excitement. More than 15,000 people thronged under the vast canvas roof of the pandal. They watched the proceedings with hearts throbbing with apprehension and hope, and tantalized by a future big with unforeseen yet enormous consequences. The news that the Congress leaders had given an ultimatum to the Viceroy had thrilled the country and the Congress was agog. Under the fluttering of the tricolour flag and the accompaniment of sky-rending shouts of *Bande Mataram,* Jawāharlāl Nehru, the President-elect, entered the pandal and strode up the dais. Preliminaries over, he delivered his address, courageous, firm, restrained. He dealt with three main topics—independence, socialism and Hindu-Muslim problem.

With regard to India's goal he brushed aside the idea of Dominion Status which implied attachment to an imperial system—so hateful to him. In socialism he gave a new direction to the independence struggle, a revolutionary form to the Indian society of the future.

The third topic of his address was the communal problem. According to his analysis the differences of the communities were based on irrational beliefs and emotions. In a modern industrial society they would disappear. He said :

"Indeed the real differences have already largely gone, but fear of each other and distrust and suspicion remain and sow seeds of discord. The problem before us is not one of removing differences. They can well remain side by side and enrich our many-sided culture. The problem is how to remove fear and suspicion and being intangible they are hard to get at.... Only faith and generosity can overcome them.... I know that the time is coming soon when these labels and appellations (Hindu, Muslim) will have little meaning and when our struggle will be on an economic basis. Meanwhile it matters little what our mutual arrangements are, provided only that we do not build up barriers which will come in the way of our future progress."[94]

These were fine words, but unfortunately divorced from reality. Whether the Muslim fear was based on actual experience or not, the

[94] Jawaharlal Nehru, The Presidential Address at the Indian National Congress Session at Lahore, December 29, 1929. *The Indian Annual Register,* 1929, Vol. II, pp. 289-90.

fact of the fear is undeniable. Again the fear could not be conjured away by appeals to faith and generosity, because it was not rooted so much in religion and custom, as in politics. Jawaharlal refused to recognise it as such, for him the economic factor was all important. The medieval sentiment derived from religion would automatically pass away with the modernisation of society. He attached, therefore, no importance to communal dissensions.

Gandhiji's remedy for the communal disease was the moral transformation of the Hindus and Muslims. Jawaharlal Nehru's prescription was economic revolution. Both were right, but their medicine was no cure for the immediate ills of India, for such radical changes were inconceivable in the then condition of India, and even in free countries their maturation took decades, if not centuries.

On the 31st December, the one year of grace contemplated in the Calcutta resolution of December 1928 came to an end. The Government had refused to accept the conditions on which the Congress was prepared to forego its commitment to the goal of independence. Under the circumstances only one course was open to the Congress. Consequently Gandhiji moved the historic resolution :

"The Congress therefore in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year declares that the word Swaraj in article 1 of the Congress Constitution shall mean Complete Independence."[95]

The resolution declared that nothing would be gained by the Congress being represented at the Round Table Conference, and that the scheme of the Nehru Report had lapsed. It called upon all Congressmen to devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of complete independence, to boycott the central and provincial legislatures. It authorized the All-India Congress Committee whenever it deemed fit to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes.

Exactly at midnight the resolution was put to vote and carried. For a hundred years (1757-1857) Indians, blinded by their particularist interests had unwittingly helped the foreigner to place the yoke of subjection on their necks. During the next three quarters of a century they had increasingly felt tormented by their galling state and strained hard to liberate themselves. In 1930 they decreed themselves to be free.

In the misty darkness of a cold December evening as the night stole through the stars and the river raced down the plain the whole concourse of Congressmen assembled on the bank of the Ravi. The flag of independent India was unfurled and a feeling of solemn dedication settled upon the hearts throbbing with inexpressible emotion.

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[95] Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 357.

The incubus of the mind had at last been removed, what remained was its disappearance from practice.

For this miracle all eyes turned expectantly towards Sabarmati Ashram. Tagore visited Gandhiji on January 18. Gandhiji told him, "I am furiously thinking, and I do not yet see any light coming out of the surrounding darkness."[96]

On January 25, the Viceroy in his address before the Legislative Assembly iterated his favourite theory : "The assertion of a goal is of necessity a different thing from the goal's attainment. And no sensible traveller could feel that a clear definition of his destination was the same thing as the completion of the journey."

Gandhiji took him at his word and instead of demanding full Dominion Status, he asked the Viceroy to concede his eleven points. Friends were surprised and protested in consternation. The British Press reacted violently against them, and Malcolm Hailey repudiated them indignantly. The episode was closed.

The first result of his furious thinking was to fix January 26, as the Independence Day when the country would take the pledge announcing India's determination to attain complete independence. The pledge declared :

"We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster (economic, political, cultural and spiritual) to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes.... We, therefore, hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing *Purna Swaraj*."[97]

On January 26, the pledge was repeated all over the country. In the thousands of India's villages and towns large gatherings of people assembled and took the pledge in solemn silence. They gave an unmistakable proof that the vast mass of the Indian people followed the Congress mandate.

In February Gandhiji was still in search of a decision. Then suddenly he discovered it. Salt Satyagraha was the answer to the question what must be done.

The solution of Gandhiji was a stroke of genius. No commander of a military plan of operations could have done better. The Salt Satyagraha had all the elements of high class strategy—surprise, universal mobilisation of forces, discipline, organisation, simplicity of

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[96] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 6.

[97] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

tactics, universal availability of means and instruments of war, challenging and surrounding the forces of the enemy from all sides, drama. A strange war in which the losses and casualties and sufferings were all on one side.

According to his normal practice on March 2, Gandhiji addressed a letter to the Viceroy, announcing his decision to start Satyagraha and explaining the grounds on which the decision was taken. The Viceroy's reply was short and curt. He regretted that Gandhi was embarking on a course of action which contravened the law and endangered public peace. Gandhiji rejoined, "On bended knees I asked for bread and I have received a stone instead." He added, "India is one vast prison-house. I repudiate this law, and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of the compulsory peace, that is choking the heart of the nation for want of free vent."[98]

On March 12, 1930, at 6-30 in the morning at the age of 61, Gandhiji set out on the march which had no parallel in the history of mankind. 78 Ashramites followed him. Crowds gathered round watering the road, bestrewing it with green leaves, and decorating it with flags and festoons. The faithful band and its inspired leader wended their long way to Dandi on the seashore where the salt law was to be broken.

The enemies jeered. Many friends were doubtful. But soon ridicule changed into fear and anger. And those that had come to scoff remained to pray. Among the last was Motilal Nehru, about whom Jayakar reported that he was openly sceptical of the efficacy of the march and of the manufacturing activity.[99] But not many days had passed when Motilal accompanied by his son headed towards the west and met Gandhiji at Jambusar. The spell so worked on him that he gifted away his palatial house at Allahabad to the nation, and was on return seen hawking illicit salt in the streets of Allahabad.

The triumphant march continued. The world watched in amazement India in prayerful mood, but every day with enthusiasm bounding higher. Jawaharlal wrote: "The fire of a great resolve is in him and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen. And love of truth that scorches and love of freedom that inspires."[100] And he exhorted the youth of India : "The field of battle lies before you, the flag of India beckons you and freedom herself awaits your coming. Do you hesitate now, you who were but yesterday so loudly on her side ? Will you be mere lookers on in this glorious struggle and see your best and bravest face the might of a great empire which has crushed your

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

[99] Majumdar, S. K. *Jinnah and Gandhi*, p. 131.

[100] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 31.

country and her children? Who lives if India dies? Who dies if India lives?"[101]

At sunset on April 5, after a 241-mile march Dandi was reached. Next morning Gandhiji walked into the waters of the sea, took his bath, returned and picked up a lump of salt and violated the law. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who was standing by his side a witness of this unprecedented deed, exclaimed, "Hail, law-breaker."

The whole country was electrified at the news. Swiftly the law-breaking movement swept across the country. Government reaction was fierce—arrests on a large scale, forcible confiscation of illegally collected salt, searches of even women in purda, banning of meetings and processions, lathi charges, and firing. Jawaharlal was arrested on April 14, Vithalbhai Patel, the President of the Assembly, and Malaviya, the leader of the Nationalist Party, resigned on April 25, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was held at Peshawar; demonstrations and firing followed in which hundreds were killed and wounded. The platoons of the Garhwali Rifles disobeyed the order to shoot and were court-martialled. Peshawar was in the hands of the people for 10 days (April 25 to May 4).

Repression was intensified, the Press Act of 1910 was revived. Gandhiji commented : "Even Dyerism pales into insignificance." He decided to galvanize the movement still further. He gave notice to the Viceroy of his intention to take possession of the Dharasana Salt Works. But before he could lead the volunteers to the Works, on the night of May 4, while he was asleep in his hut, the police and the magistrate woke him up at 12.45 a.m., arrested him and speeded with him to Yeravda Central Jail.

A new dimension was added to the excitement which prevailed in the land. Salt making, salt peddling, courting arrest, suffering brutal police attacks, going to gaols handcuffed or bound with ropes, forcible breaking of meetings, shootings, confiscation of property, were the order of the day. Some 100,000 are reckoned to have been imprisoned.

One of the worst incidents was the Dharasana (Surat District) raid on May 21 by a large number of Satyagrahis (2,500) led by Sarojini Naidu and Imam Sahib (an old colleague of Gandhiji in South Africa). Pyarelal (Gandhiji's Secretary) and Manilal Gandhi (Gandhiji's son) were with the volunteers.

Webb Miller, the American correspondent of the United Press, wrote an eye-witness's account for the *New Freeman*. Manilal moved forward at the head of the marchers towards the salt pans which were protected by ditches and barbed wire and a large force of police under their British officers. As the volunteers waded through the ditches

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[101] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

and approached the barbed wire fence, the police ordered them to retreat. But they refused to obey. "Suddenly", Webb Miller reports, "at a word of command, scores of native policemen rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like nine-pins. I heard sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing with fractured skulls or broken shoulders.... The survivors, without breaking ranks, silently and doggedly marched on until struck down."[102] "Although everyone knew," wrote Miller, "that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. They marched steadily, with heads up, without the encouragement of music or cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward till struck down."[102]

320 men were injured, many lay unconscious in the temporary hospital, others were in agony from the lathi blows. Two men died.

The gruesome scenes were repeated for several days.

Gandhiji was vindicated. Truth and non-violence had been tested in the crucible of suffering with success. Says Louis Fischer, "The British beat the Indians with batons and rifle butts. The Indians neither cringed nor retreated. That made England powerless and India invincible."[104]

While Gandhiji was in prison the movement continued with unabated vigour. Salt depots were the targets of the Satyagrahis. Then the Congress Working Committee speeded up the boycott activities; foreign cloth, British banking, British insurance, British shipping and other British concerns were banned, in some places no-tax campaigns were started; liquor shops were picketed, and appeals were made to the Indian army and police to treat the non-cooperators as their brethren. Gandhi day was celebrated, the police was defied and lathi charges patiently borne. The women volunteers rendered brave service in picketing and other activities.

The reaction of the Government was full of fire and fury. Ordinance was piled upon ordinance, the Press Act of 1910 was revived. Jails were filled with Congress men and women. Lathi blows were rained upon demonstrators. In fact, no punches were barred. 67 newspapers were shut and 55 printing presses closed. The result

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[102] Fischer, L., *op. cit.*, pp. 298-99.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 300.

of the repression was that within three months all the principal leaders of the Congress were in jail and the organisation banned. The campaign which according to Satyagraha rules was to be conducted in the open gradually went underground.

But the effects of civil disobedience were considerable. About a hundred thousand persons went to jail, foreign goods worth thirty crore rupees were sealed in the city and port of Bombay, the general imports were reduced to one-third or one-fourth and cigarettes to one-sixth of the normal. Decline had started on sterling securities in India. Sixteen British-owned cloth mills of Bombay were closed. Khadi production and sale went up: the Spinners Association employed about 1,40,000 spinners, 11,500 weavers and 1,000 carders. Government revenue and forest income fell.

The Salt Satyagraha drew the attention of the world to the struggle in India, and incited the interest of different groups of people and of varying interests to what was happening. In India no one could escape from the tremendous shock of this human earthquake—nationalists, communists, officials and non-officials. All hesitation and doubt about the goal of India vanished into thin air. Moderate, Extremist, Muslim Leaguer, Hindu Mahasabhaite, politician of every hue joined in the chorus for self-government. Swaraj, Home Rule, Dominion Status, Independence were all seen to indicate the same substance—freedom from foreign rule. Jinnah who had disagreed with the Congress, harshly criticised Gandhiji and his methods, and thrown his weight to persuade the Muslims to welcome the Round Table Conference, supported the demand for responsible government of the type obtaining in the Dominions.

Of the two aims of the awakened nationalism—freedom and unity, the first had already come to possess the Indian mind and its translation into political reality was only a matter of time. About unity there had arisen serious questions—whether it should be of a homogeneous character or federal—that is a unity of unities. In 1930 the Congress still thought in terms of homogeneity, the Muslim League in terms of federalism. Hence there was a conflict. Jinnah claimed that the Muslim community disapproved of the Congress declaration of independence and refused to join the Satyagraha movement. The Satyagrahis pointed out that the majority of Muslims were with the Congress. Such eminent Muslim leaders as Abbas Tyabji, Abul Kalam Azad, Ansari, Syed Mahmud, Tasadduq Ahmad Khan Sherwani, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and many others individually and the Jamiatul Ulama, Ahrarul Islam, Khudai Khidmatgars, and the Nationalist Muslim Party as organisations took a prominent part in the movement. Even Choudhry Khaliquzzaman

who regarded the fight for independence as a colossal blunder acted as Dictator of the Congress during the last months of 1930.

In December 1930, Iqbal presiding over the Muslim League session at Allahabad put forward the claim for an autonomous Muslim State for the north-western region of India within the Indian Federation where the Muslim population was in a majority. Little attention was paid to it even in Muslim League circles. The Ulama of Deoband opposed the idea of a separate Muslim State and Syed Ahmad Madni, an eminent jurist, attacked Iqbal for his opposition to Hindu-Muslim cooperation on the basis of the *Shariat* law.

According to some accounts nearly 12,000 Muslims went to jail during the course of the Salt Satyagraha. The fate of the community hung in the balance; later, for reasons to be explained, the scales definitely turned against unity.

The decision of the Congress to abstain from attending the Round Table Conference and to start the civil disobedience movement presented the Government with a perplexing situation. Irwin had banked upon the cooperation of the Congress in giving effect to the plan which he had unfolded in his Declaration of October 31, 1929. Even Jawaharlal was impressed favourably for he admitted in his Presidential address, "The Viceroy means well and his language was the language of peace." Unfortunately Irwin was unable to see the difference between the point of view of the Government and of the Congress on the two basic issues—(1) Dominion Status in immediate action with temporary limitations and Dominion Status as a distant goal, (2) Parliament as an authority to affix the stamp of legality on an agreement between India and Britain and Parliament as judge and arbiter of India's progress towards the goal.

The Salt Satyagraha and the Dandi march were not at the start taken seriously by Government. They considered the movement a mad venture on the part of a crazy visionary. They fondly believed the movement would fall completely flat and either Gandhiji would have to recall it or it would die of ennui. Irwin hoped that "the march, inauspiciously begun, would peter out in failure and ridicule, and he had no desire to martyrize Gandhi prematurely."[106] In any case they were quite confident of their ability to suppress it, and they were prepared to put Gandhiji behind the bars if necessary. They relied upon the well-tried three-pronged policy—repression of agitators; reliance upon pro-Government elements, Moderates, Muslims, Indian propertied classes to divide the nationalist forces; and concessions.

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[105] The Viceroy tried through the Nawab of Bhopal to persuade Khaliquzzaman to publicly dissociate himself from the Congress, or be prepared for arrest. *Irwin Papers*.

[106] The Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax*, p. 281.

Irwin looked upon the Lahore resolution as involving mischievous and dangerous potentialities—a secession movement, subversive of the Government and threatening revolutionary violence.[107] The advice of the Secretary of State was :

"Try and avoid action which will force you to deal with masses, but rather pick responsible leaders and deal with them whoever and whatever they are. Keep up moral authority of Government and rally round it those who respect law and order and whose political instincts will defend India from revolutionary movement while pursuing evolutionary politics. Maintain policy of reform whilst handling with firm determination revolutionary leadership."[108]

The day after the Dandi march started the Viceroy was in puzzlement. He wrote to Wedgwood Benn, "Most of my thought at the moment is concentrated upon Gandhi. I wish I felt sure what the right way to deal with him (is)."[109]

But even at the end of the march and the breach of salt law Irwin was feeling "his movement is not yet catching hold as much as he would have hoped." At the same time Gandhi could not be treated as an ordinary law breaker, yet it was necessary to avoid creating the legend 'that Gandhi is unarrestable'. He thought the happiest solution of the dilemma would be "that he will die this year",[110] as predicted by astrologers.

Not long after, the tune began to change. The weekly reports which the Government of India supplied to the Secretary of State show the whole extent and serious character of the disturbances. These reports begin from May 17, 1930 and go on throughout the year giving a review of the weekly happenings.

On the North-Western Frontier many tribes rose in revolt instigated by the Mullahs like Haji Turangzai and his son. In the Tochi Valley, Waziristan and other parts the Government tried to suppress the movement by bombing from the air.

In the North-West Frontier Province Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the Frontier Gandhi, raised a corps of volunteers named *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Servants of God) to propagate the Congress programme. When on April 23, the Government laid its hand on the leaders of the Congress and the volunteers an attempt was made to rescue them and serious rioting ensued. Armoured cars were used to terrorise the crowds and recourse was had to firing.

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107 *Irwin Papers* : Viceroy to Wedgwood Benn, January 9, 1930.

108 *Ibid.*, From the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, Telegram P, January 17, 1930.

109 No. 202, *Ibid.*, From Viceroy to W. Benn, March 13, 1930.

110 *Ibid.*, From Viceroy to W. Benn, April 7, 1930.

For many months conditions were abnormal all over India—raids on salt works, picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops, demonstration by large mobs. Manifestations of defiance of authority created an atmosphere of uncertainty.

As early as May 12, Irwin issued a statement which contains the following :

"The events of the past three weeks have seen the melancholy fulfilment of the anticipations expressed in my reply to Mr. Gandhi's letter. From quarters as far distant as Peshawar and Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, Chittagong and Karachi, Delhi and Sholapur, have come an ominous tale of mob violence, of armed murderous raids and of general defiance of lawful authority."[111]

On April 24, Irwin wrote to Benn : "Their (Congress') main object was to prepare the country for widespread defiance of law and from a given date to proclaim by widespread demonstrations their contempt for lawful authority. In this object they have attained a considerable measure of success."[112]

But his consolation was that "the Mahommedans as a community have kept aloof from the movement", and the labour had not played a large part in the demonstrations. His reaction was "nothing has so far seemed to occasion depression—still less alarm."[113]

Five days later he was telling Benn, "Situation seems to me to be no longer one where Government can afford to give ground to any quarter for supposition that they are afraid to do so"[114] (arrest Gandhiji).

On May 5, Gandhiji was arrested and imprisoned in Yeravda Jail, Poona. The Secretary of State applauded the Viceroy on his action, assured him that all British parties had full confidence in him, and that the Cabinet accepted his views.

The expectation that Gandhiji's removal from the scene would lead to the collapse of the movement proved wrong, and the Viceroy reported on May 22 :

"There is no doubt that Gandhi has evoked a much wider nationalist movement among Hindus than any observer, British or Indian, so far as I know, anticipated. Nor has the policy of cutting off the tall poppies been so successful as we hoped in defeating it."[115]

In fact he was so disturbed in mind that he began to reflect, "the

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[111] The Viceroy's announcement on the Round Table Conference, May 12, 1930. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1930, Vol. I, p. 110.

[112] *Irwin Papers* : Viceroy to W. Benn, April 24, 1930.

[113] *Ibid.*

[114] *Ibid.* The Viceroy's telegram to the Secretary of State, April 29, 1930.

[115] *Ibid.* From the Viceroy to Wedgwood Benn, May 22, 1930.

effective choice, therefore, seems to be between surrender to Gandhi or resistance to the agitation."[116]

He whose vaunt was that he was not easily frightened by bogeys was now convinced, "it would be a mistake to attempt to disguise the fact that we are faced with a formidable menace to constituted Government, and we need all our resources and must use all our resources to meet it."[117] He recognised at last "that the Muslims and other minorities desire political advance also. There is hardly any section of informed opinion in India that contemplates standing still."[118]

By June 2, the Viceroy's appreciation was, "the movement is serious and has permeated many strata of Indian society. It has caught their imagination and swept them off their feet and obviously has dangerous potentialities. I am satisfied that we shall not solve the real problem merely by repressive measures, and it is therefore necessary to examine possibilities of constructive action in the light of various possible developments in future."[119]

XII. The Urgency of Round Table Conference

The progress of the civil disobedience movement compelled the Government to consider ways of meeting the growing menace. The immediate decision, of course, was resort to repressive measures whose main objective was to prohibit the functioning of the Congress organisation by banning all its committees, arresting the leaders wholesale, and outlawing every form of political activity—meetings, processions, picketing, propaganda, etc. At the same time special attention was paid to prevent the Muslims of the rest of India from joining the civil disobedience movement following the example of the Muslims of the North-West Frontier Province.

On May 13, Irwin gave an assurance to the Muslims that no solution of the political problem would be regarded as satisfactory which did not command the assent of important minorities and gave them a sense of security.[120] The veto thus given as a reward for loyalty was fully exploited by the Muslim communalists, as the sequel would show. But although by these means the manifestation of hostile and disruptive activities could be checked, the basic causes of unrest were not removed; the danger of large-scale outbreak which might subvert law and order was not eliminated.

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116 *Ibid.*

117 *Ibid.*, May 24, 1930.

118 *Ibid.*

119 *Ibid.*, June 2, 1930.

120 *The Indian Annual Register*, May 17, 1930, Vol. II, p. 107.

The Viceroy as the man on the spot witnessed the daily deteriorating conditions. The movement 'had produced a high commotion in the blood of the Indian people'. The fear of the Viceroy had come true, he had alienated many who were moderate in their politics, opposed to civil disobedience, and desirous of cooperating with Government. Force had failed to extinguish the spirit of revolt against law and government. Dangers lurked on the Frontier. Ground was being prepared for the expansion of communist influence.

The report of the Statutory Commission which was published on June 13 and 24, 1930, confirmed the worst fears of the Nationalists. It deliberately omitted any mention of Dominion Status even as the distant goal of India's political progress. It recommended no transfer of power, retaining all authority in the hands of the irresponsible Central Government. In the provinces dyarchy was to be abolished, but the autonomy was hedged by the grant of special powers to the Government of India over financial matters. The Commission instead of rejecting the vicious principle of separate electorates against which it had given cogent arguments perpetuated it, offering an additional sop to communal intransigence.

The proposals of the Commission were utterly unacceptable to the Congress and the other political parties; they were regarded unsatisfactory by the Muslim League also. Even the Viceroy felt outraged. He wrote to the Secretary of State :

"The fundamental omission of all his Report, as I read it, is his very obvious and deliberate refusal to take the bandage off his eyes and admit the existence of the Dominion Status claim in terms. The thing seems to me very much to lack imagination."[121]

All things combined to bring home to the Viceroy the urgency of expediting consideration of the Reforms. He began to press the Secretary of State on three subjects—(1) fixing an early date for the meeting of the Conference, in order to turn the minds of Indians from agitation to constructive work; (2) selecting delegates who would participate in the Conference; (3) determining the agenda and the basic principles for discussion.

Irwin's endeavour was to soften the shock of the Simon Commission Report by side-tracking its importance and emphasising the independent role of the Round Table Conference.

He was convinced that India had travelled far since the time of Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and, in fact, its transformation of political thought during the last year or two had been phenomenal. Malcolm Hailey who was considered one of the most successful

[121] Lord Irwin to the Secretary of State, June 20, 1930. The Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax*, p. 287.

administrators of the times and who had spent his whole working life in India supported Irwin's opinion. He said :

"You ask whether opinion in India was by November 1929 or January 1930 moving so fast that it had already outstripped the proposals contained in the Simon Report. I think the proposals embodied in the Nehru Report represented something that was not merely more advanced, but something that had secured a measure of public support far greater than most of us realized."[122]

To this may be added the testimony of Wedgwood Benn who admitted that the Simon Commission had ignored that, "since the conclusion of the Commission's work the national feeling has grown at a speed and has gained a momentum which have taken even qualified observers by surprise."[123] He had come to believe that if India was to remain a part of the British empire, it would only do so on terms of equality of status with the Dominions.

Concerning his first point the Viceroy spoke of "the gulf between the approach of the political mind in India and the political mind in Great Britain to the constitutional discussions", in as much as while to India the Conference loomed immensely large, the Commission's Report exercised immense influence upon British opinion. In the circumstances he suggested to the Labour Secretary of State to include members of the other parties with the Government delegates in the Conference.[124]

On March 26, he telegraphed to Wedgwood Benn : "The feeling is growing very strong in all parties in favour of holding Conference in London this year and earlier the better. ... Our friends want something concrete to check the tide that they feel is running against them. ... I think that in view of the strength and universality of feeling that Conference should be this year, we ought to take steps as early as possible to announce our readiness to meet it."[125]

By May 1, the Secretary of State after consulting the Prime Minister and the Cabinet decided the date of the Conference in October, but later changed it to November 12.

Irwin's mind was not exercised upon constitutional matters. He felt that it was necessary to restore the confidence of unofficial Indians in the general approach to the problem. He discussed the problem with Sapru—an expert on constitutional law, an outstanding personality among the Liberals and highly respected by the Congress leaders—Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru and others. His conclusion was that "in order to regain India's trust we must be able to produce a generous but

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[122] Cited in the Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax*, p. 290.

[123] *Irwin Papers* : Secretary of State to the Viceroy, June 20, 1930.

[124] *Ibid.*, Viceroy to Wedgwood Benn, March 6, 1930.

[125] *Ibid.*, Viceroy to the Secretary of State, March 26, 1930.

secure and defensible policy that will enable men who want a settlement to say that they have got what they call 'Dominion Status' with safeguards."[126]

The Secretary of State explained the Government's policy in a letter to the Viceroy. He said, "This demand for Dominion Status (with safeguards) seems to me, not only contradictory in terms, but dangerous in character." To the question, "is the British Parliament prepared to abdicate in advance its detailed right of legislation for India and to give any general assurance that if India can settle her own problems, the British Parliament will accept the settlement?" his reply was, "Clearly such an assurance in absolute terms cannot be given."[127]

Irwin persisted in urging upon the Secretary of State the need of conciliating nationalist opinion by a fresh settlement. He suggested either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State should make a declaration in Parliament regarding the aims and objects of the Round Table Conference and indicating the line the Government should take concerning the constitutional problem. He actually sent a draft of the declaration to Benn which contained five important points :

(1) That the Round Table Conference would be fully free in discussing any proposal. "It would not be right to limit its (RTC's) scope by any terms of reference."

(2) That the Government would lend every assistance to India in the attainment of Dominion Status which the Viceroy's statement of October 31, 1929 declared as the natural issue of India's constitutional progress;

(3) that the Government hoped that the Congress would be prepared to reconsider their decision about joining;

(4) that the Government would not spare any effort in assisting to harmonise conflicting interests among the various communities of India;

(5) that the agreements arrived at in the Conference would form the basis of proposals which Government would submit to Parliament.[128]

The draft was given by MacDonald to Baldwin and Lloyd George for eliciting the opinion of the leaders of the two parties, and seeking their concurrence. A meeting of the leaders of the three parties was held. According to Chamberlain's record of the proceedings, Wedgwood Benn told them, "We were face to face with such a situation as

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126 *Ibid.* The Viceroy to the Secretary of State regarding his discussions with Sapru, May 8, 1930.

127 *Ibid.* Wedgwood Benn to the Viceroy, June 5, 1930.

128 *Chamberlain Papers*: Memorandum by Chamberlain, Part I, June 27, 1930.

had existed in Sinn Fein Ireland. More repressive ordinances had already been passed than in any similar period of Indian history. They were indeed contemplating still further and more drastic measures against the Congress", but he indicated that he had no faith in their success.[129]

Austen Chamberlain held that the mention of 'Dominion Status' in the declaration was very dangerous, and implied a complete surrender to Gandhi's demand. He urged that the Simon Commission Report which was all-parties unanimous report ought to be the basis of discussion at the Round Table Conference. He asked the Government to declare what it intended to do.

MacDonald replied, if the declaration was no tmade in these terms the Viceroy would resign.

After this preliminary discussion numerous meetings were arranged between the Government spokesmen and the other parties leaders. Meetings were also held by the parties separately and much correspondence was exchanged between them and the Viceroy in order to clarify the situation. Tempers were ruffled, for the proposed declaration caused consternation among the leaders of the Conservatives and Liberals, who were strongly opposed to the idea of relegating the Commission Report to the background and giving prominence to the idea of Dominion Status.

The Viceroy and the Secretary of State strongly felt the imperative need of making a statement which would pull back the Moderates and the reconcilable and isolate the instransigents.

Benn argued that while it was possible in 1919 to use tutorial terms in the Preamble of the Act, India had moved far since those times. The Indians had gained much experience of the work of government over large fields, the war had spread ideas of self-government far and wide, the third Afghan War, the revolution in Turkey, the establishment of national government in China, the growth of freedom in the British dominions, all combined to stimulate the desire of India to end the position of wards in which the Government of India Act of 1919 had placed them. It was no longer possible to think of "an objective solution". "Great Britain will make an irrevocable mistake if she attempts to ignore the subjective and psychological side of the whole problem."[130]

The Simon Commission Report lacked colour and imagination and had presented the British view of the situation. It was necessary to have the Indian view too, which would only be gathered in a Round Table Conference. "It might be that even Gandhi's support, with his

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[129] *Ibid.*

[130] *Irwin Papers* : Viceroy to Wedgwood Benn, July 3, 1930.

doctrine of, and of possible belief in, non-violence might be worth having."[131]

In order to obtain this support he was willing to go far, "We mean Dominion Status and cannot conceive an India unwillingly retained by force in the Empire. We recognise the enormous practical difficulties that exist and believe that measures to meet them are as welcome to Indians as they are obvious and necessary. We do not intend that the need for such safeguards should be made an excuse, directly or indirectly, for running India except in the interests of those to whom India is home.

We recognise that we have a duty to minorities, but the trusteeship must not be exploited in any way against the interest of the majority. That is to say, while we cannot go away and tell the minorities to make the best terms they can with a powerful majority, we do not intend, on the other hand, to remain and deprive the majority of its rights, relying ourselves upon the support of one or more minorities."[132]

Irwin entirely agreed. He told Wedgwood Benn, "It really makes me weep to think that in a matter of this kind Stanley Baldwin should commit his judgment to Austen (Chamberlain), whose contact with India is distant and whose mind is always that of a log of wood."[133]

He characterized the Simon Commission Report, "a most deplorable illustration of the objective method. It really makes my blood boil to fancy those people with mentality like that, not knowing the ABC of the actual problem as you and I have to deal with it, should have such capacities for making mischief."[134]

His constructive suggestions were complete provincial autonomy, some devolution of authority to the representatives of the people, that is, some form of dyarchy at the centre, and safeguards for certain subjects like defence, foreign affairs and minority rights. So far as the Central Government was concerned he wrote, "I cannot believe when people face up to it that there is any way out of the impasse in which Simon has left us, with an elected Assembly and an irresponsible executive, other than that I suggested."[135]

But he was obliged in view of the painfully severe opposition of the other parties to suggest a conciliatory course consisting of the following points :

(1) Dominion Status declaration standing,

(2) Simon's Report not being the last word,

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[131] Wedgwood Benn to Viceroy, June 20, 1930.

[132] *Ibid.*

[133] *Irwin Papers* : Viceroy to the Secretary of State, July 3, 1930.

[134] *Ibid.*

[135] *Ibid.*

(3) Authoritative character of the Conference to be announced by him in his speech to the legislature.[136]

Baldwin telegraphed to Irwin the following day, "Attestation of any impression that British or Indian Government is prepared to advise that Central Government should be made responsible to an Indian Legislature could only lead to disillusion and disappointment ... to serious consequences which must follow destruction of basis for All-parties agreement provided by Simon Commission."[137]

Irwin replied reiterating his opinion regarding the inadequacy of the Simon recommendations and the need of some advance on the Report which would satisfy at least the moderate sections of Indian politicians. He offered his resignation in case his Declaration of October 31, 1929 was not allowed to stand. But he requested Baldwin to refrain from treating the matter as a party issue.

Irwin's reply of July 6 to Baldwin's telegram failed to remove the apprehensions of the Conservatives and the Liberals. Austen Chamberlain on behalf of his party, told MacDonald and Wedgwood Benn with brutal frankness that they should either consider the Report as the real settlement of the issue or face the consequences, that is, their opposition to the Labour Party's declaration and withdrawal of their support. This meant certain defeat of the Labour Government.

The threat worked. The Labour leaders surrendered. India was expendible, office was more precious than the goodwill of India. Wedgwood Benn communicated to Irwin the views of the Conservative and Liberal parties and the helplessness of the Government. Baldwin had already directly conveyed to Irwin the serious consequences of his proposal. Wedgwood Benn and Irwin had to climb down and abandon their progressive ideas concerning the functioning of the Round Table Conference and the constitutional advance.

On July 9, the Governor General made a statement in the Central Legislature which was delightfully vague about the benign intentions of the Government. Although he knew perfectly well the attitude of the parties in Parliament, he indulged in non-committal phrases, only assuring that the Government would take into consideration the agreed proposals of the Conference in preparing the Constitutional Bill for Parliament. He condemned the Congress for starting the civil disobedience movement, and invited it to abandon the agitation and participate in the discussions of the Conference.

[136] *Ibid.*

[137] *Ibid.*, Baldwin's telegram enclosed in the S.S.'s telegram of July 4, 1930.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

I. The First Session

In a letter to Wedgwood Benn discussing the prospects of the proposed Round Table Conference Irwin expressed the view that the most opportune time for the Conference was in 1924, after the Legislative Assembly had adopted the motion of Motilal Nehru recommending to the Governor-General the need of holding such a Conference to settle the constitutional problem. He was right. In 1924, the Congress had realized that the country was not prepared to continue the non-cooperation movement. Its right wing, the Swarajist Party, had admitted the importance of political work through the councils and was anxious to cooperate with the Government in discussions on political reforms. The Liberal Federation of the Moderates was eager to promote any plan for the consideration of advance. The Muslim organisations were in the doldrums. The Muslim League, however, although inactive, had accepted the goal of self-government, and what is more to the point, the Muslims had not yet developed that hysteria of apprehension and fear which began to possess them after the failure of the All-Parties Conference in December 1928. Jinnah had withdrawn from the Congress, but was still genuinely desirous of cooperation with it. The communal riots of 1921-24 had undoubtedly muddied the waters, but both communities were exploring ways to clear them.

Therefore, on the Indian side, the discovery of a solution for the two fundamental problems—(1) the next step in the political progress of the country, viz., responsible government at the Centre with such safeguards as were considered necessary, and (2) the agreement between the communities with safeguards for the minorities, was not difficult to reach.

Unfortunately all the obstacles were on the British side. Montagu in 1922, Peel in 1923 and Olivier in 1924 shut the doors and refused any reopening of the constitutional issue till the statutory period of ten years was over. To apply such mechanical formulae to a human problem was the extreme of folly. The war of 1914-19, the declarations of the statesmen of the allied powers—Woodrow Wilson, Asquith, Lloyd George, the appeals for war effort and the generous response of the people of India, the economic hardship borne uncomplainingly, the Caliphate problem and the Muslim misgivings and desperation, the

Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the non-cooperation movement, had all combined to change the face of India. The two pillars on which the edifice of the British Empire rested were tottering. The old Indian fear of the might of an ever-expanding, all powerful empire, began to dissipate as reports of the smashing victories of the Central Powers began reaching India. The frightening losses of British shipping by German submarines and the eventual rescue from certain defeat of the western European allies by the overwhelming aid of the massive industrial output and manpower of the United States of America, completed the disillusionment. The weaknesses of the British were exposed for all to see. The sentiment of loyalty to the rulers also evanesced, and the new spirit of self-reliance and self-esteem reinforcing the desire for freedom and equality, took its place.

Lord Reading, the shining light of the Liberal Party, who held the reins of Viceregal office at the time belonged to the school of liberal imperialists, and although in closer contact with the currents of opinion in India than the British politicians, had little sympathy with the aspirations of the Indian people. He became aware of the influence of the Congress over the electorate only when the elections of 1923 took place. He felt disturbed at the power of the nationalist party as it manifested itself in the Legislative Assembly and the provincial councils. But he paid little heed and clung to the complacent belief that the phenomenon was transient.

From 1924 to 1931 the growth of nationalist demand for independence acquired unprecedented strength. Even the wooden Government of India acknowledged it, as the correspondence of Irwin and Wedgwood Benn amply testifies. In fact the hard-boiled bureaucrats who surrounded the Governor-General were shaken in their conviction about 'firm government and no lump of clotted nonsense'. Henceforward the despatches of the Government of India pleaded for concessions and denied the efficacy of sheer repression.

But in England, this period (1924-35) was one of Baldwin's ascendancy. He had succeeded the "spineless" MacDonald in office in 1924, and his cabinet consisted of such brilliant but crusty Conservatives as Austen Chamberlain, Birkenhead, Balfour and Winston Churchill. They had been catapulted into power by exploiting the 'Zinoviev letter' which turned the British voters against the Labour Party which appeared to be toeing the communist line. With the defeat of the Labour Party, the disintegration of the Liberal Party and with the return of the Conservatives with an absolute majority at their command in Parliament, the Conservatives believed that they could ignore the importunities of the Government of India and what appeared to them as the extravagant claims of the Indian politicians. During the short interlude of June 1929 to August 1931 the Labour Party

formed a minority government which was largely at the mercy of the opposition.

When Irwin arrived upon the scene, his conservative instincts and experience of the ugly communal discords in India inclined him to dismiss claims for responsible government. However, because of party exigencies the date of the appointment of the Statutory Commission was advanced and he thoughtlessly, without realizing the consequences, insisted upon the all-white composition of the Commission. This triggered off a series of unfortunate events. Irwin's remedy for the unfavourable developments was the announcement of October 31, 1929. But the remedy was rendered infructuous by the overpowering hostility of the parties in Parliament. The counter-attack from India was inevitable and of equal force.

Irwin underestimated its strength in the beginning. However, as the civil disobedience movement gathered momentum he was astounded. All his calculations of its speedy collapse went awry. He was faced with a new crisis. His plan to repair the damage done by his first mistaken scheme—*viz.*, the Simon Commission, by substituting for it the Round Table Conference endowed with equality between British and Indian representatives, free discussion and authority to lay down agreed decisions for the guidance of the Government and Parliament, appeared to be foundering.

In fact, he was impaled on the horns of an unpleasant dilemma. If, on the one hand, he persisted with the Conference without the participation of the Congress he stood accused of playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. On the other hand, if he wished to induce the Congress to cooperate he must fulfil its conditions, that is, surrender to Gandhiji.

He tried to resolve the dilemma by adopting a new design. Its elements were :

(1) The Conference caravan must proceed, whatever the decision of the Congress;

(2) The delegates from India should be so chosen as to create the impression that India was fully represented, and the exclusion of the Congress representatives could be made out as the absence of only one among the many groups and interests in the country and, therefore, immaterial;

(3) Meanwhile efforts should be continued to induce the Congress to join the Conference.

The choice of the delegates was determined by the consideration that the Congress should be made to appear as an extremist body which was opposed by all other groups and interests in India. The following categories of members were therefore chosen by the Governor-General :

(1) Politicians belonging to all-India parties who were moderate, compromising anti-boycotters, keen on keeping India within the orbit of the British Empire;

(2) Representatives of communal organisations, such as the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikhs, the Christians, the non-Brahmins, the Scheduled Castes.

(3) Representatives of economic interests—the landowners and industrialists.

(4) Representatives of non-Indian groups with particularist interests—the Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Burmese.

(5) Representatives from the Princely States of India.

(6) The British delegates chosen to represent the three parliamentary parties.

So far as the Congress was concerned the Viceroy gave permission to Sapru and Jayakar to intervene, confer with Gandhiji and the Congress leaders in jail and try to find a way out of the impasse. The two peace-seeking messengers saw Gandhiji in Yeravda prison, Motilal and Jawaharlal in Naini jail, and then brought them together at Yeravda, along with Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Vallabhbhai Patel. Gandhiji told them that the Congress party was not prepared to go to London without an assurance that the discussions would proceed on the basis of full responsible government—*Purna Swaraj*. As the Government was not prepared to concede the demand the effort failed, and the first Round Table Conference met in an atmosphere of unreality.

Roughly speaking, the number of the first category of delegates was twenty, there were sixteen Muslims, three Mahasabhaites, two Sikhs, one Christian, four non-Brahmins, two members of the Depressed Classes, four landowners, four Europeans, one Anglo-Indian, one Indian businessman and three Burmese. The Indian States were represented by sixteen members, and the British delegation also consisted of sixteen members—eight chosen from the Labour Party and four each from the Conservative and Liberal Parties. There were altogether eighty-nine members.

In selecting the Muslim delegates Irwin was guided by Fazli Husain, member of his Executive Council, who was keen on excluding any Muslim who was suspected of leanings towards the Congress, and who, under the pressure of Wedgwoom Benn, might be suspected to give support to joint electorates. His son says in the biography of Fazli Husain, "He accordingly used all his influence and powers of persuasion in the selection of a Muslim Delegation consisting of members . . . who would not only represent his viewpoint but do so effectively."[1]

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[1] Azim Husain, *Fazli Husain*, p. 250.

Coatman, the panegyrist of Irwin, erstwhile Government servant and editor of the official publication *India,* writing about the delegation observes :

"It should be clearly understood that the Indian delegates to the Round Table Conference were not there to speak with one voice for India as a whole. They were there to represent Indian States, this or that community interest, and so on. . . . The great Moslem leaders like His Highness the Aga Khan and the late Sir Muhammad Shafi who, whilst determined to safeguard all the legitimate interests of their community, were determined to do so because they knew that without a solution which Moslems and other minorities believed to be equitable there could be no lasting peace and no great political progress in India. But most of the delegates were charged with the representation of special interests."[2]

Coupland, Beit Professor of Colonial History in the Oxford University and author of a number of books on the Indian constitutional problem, describing the Round Table Conference says, "Now the whole complex of the Indian problem was brought to life, so to speak, before their eyes on the London stage. Yet not quite the whole. There was a gap in the company. The largest and most vigorous organism in Indian politics, the one which appealed most strongly to the youth of India, was not represented. The attitude of the Congress was still implacably hostile."[3]

Misunderstanding of the Minority

This motley crowd was herded into the Royal Palace of St. James in London to work out the future destiny of India and to perform the miracle of creating political unity among all the communities and interests by delegates chosen to fight for their own particular rights and privileges, while the party which was fighting the battle of unity and Swaraj was left out.

The Round Table Conference seemed designed more to advertise the diversities of India than to promote unity. Even Fazli Husain in the beginning "was opposed to the holding of a Round Table Conference as it was a sure means of exhibiting conflict among Indians, and side-tracking the vital issue of the transfer of power into Indian hands."[4] What logic, for instance, was there in treating the Hindu Mahasabha, the Zamindars, the non-Brahmins and the Scheduled Castes as independent groups separate from the general population of India? If the last two were socially and economically backward, how could constitutional or legal safeguards possibly change their condition

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[2] Coatman, J., *Years of Destiny, India 1926-32,* pp. 305-06.

[3] Coupland, R., *The Indian Problem,* Part I, p. 113.

[4] Azim Husain, *op. cit.,* p. 230.

which depended upon economic development fostered by the policy of the Government in power. The British Government during their rule of over one hundred and fifty years had done precious little to develop the economy so as to provide gainful employment to the large numbers of these helpless classes for the removal of their poverty and low status.

In no country in the history of the world and at no stage in their evolution, have all classes of a society enjoyed equality of economic and social status. Even in the most progressive democratic countries of today the equality of political rights of all citizens is a matter of very recent growth, while economic equality, outside the communist societies, is still only an aspiration. For instance, one might ask, have the black Negroes of the USA who till 1861 were treated as slaves—in law even worse than the Depressed Classes of India, achieved in 1971 equality with the Whites in social and economic status? Again, what was the condition of the working classes in England at the beginning of the 19th century? Economic historians like Cole and novelists like Dickens furnish the answer. For that matter, in the slums of London, Manchester and other towns of England in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when General Booth of the Salvation Army started his investigation and Blatchford, the journalist, exposed them in the newspapers, the squalor and misery that existed is hard to believe. Reference may be made to Booth's work, *In Darkest England, and the Way Out.*

If foreigners were governing these countries they would have exploited these social evils as argument to deny them self-government.

The trotting out of the facts of social evils as a ground for negativing advance towards self-government was altogether hyprocritical.

Of course, such communities as the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Christians had a legitimate claim to be assured of their religious and cultural freedom, but neither the Congress nor the Liberal Federation nor even the Hindu Mahasabha was opposed to giving of guarantees for securing such rights. It was not the demand for religious and cultural freedom of any community which was in serious dispute, but the demand for extraordinary political privileges and weightages for the minorities.

The Muslims undoubtedly had a case which required special consideration. They occupied a peculiar position in the country. In numbers in the whole of India they constituted about a quarter of the total population. Their distribution was not uniform. In some regions they were in an overwhelming majority, for instance, North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sind and Western Panjab, as also in Kashmir. In the eastern region of Bengal they possessed a considerably large majority.

The greater proportion of the Muslim population was concentrated in these territories, which could fulfil the requirement of a homeland of the Muslims.

But in the rest of India they were a minority—not more than 15 per cent in any province and less than 4 per cent in the Central Provinces (census of 1921) and Orissa.

The demand for an autonomous state within or without the Indian Federation for the western and eastern regions was a tacit recognition of the fact that the political interests of the Muslims were not identical in the two divisions of India—(1) India with a Hindu majority, and (2) India with a Muslim majority.

But unfortunately neither the Muslims themselves nor the others—Indian and British, realised that the problem of the Muslims had two distinct aspects—one that of the regions where the Muslims predominated and the other of the Muslim minorities scattered over the rest of India. What was legitimate for the first was not right for the second. The first potentially possessed the two essential elements of nationality—a defined territorial basis and the emerging will to live as an autonomous political order. The latter had no geographically integrated territorial unit where they were in a majority. It followed, therefore, that willy-nilly the latter could not claim in the state any other status but that of a minority, with of course safeguards for religion and culture, and equality in law and politics like all other citizens, irrespective of race, creed or caste.

There was unfortunately a tragic misunderstanding of the term minority. Now the word is applied to two very different types of numerical inferiorities of groups. One type of inferiority is permanent, for instance, that based on the race, culture, or religion of the members of the group. The differences of this kind are scarcely amenable to ordinary historical change. They are deep-rooted and people cling to them passionately with great persistence.

The other type is transient and changes as the weather with every modification in the atmosphere of opinion. Such are the political minorities in democratically governed countries. In England the Labour majority of today yields to the Conservative majority of tomorrow. In the United States the Democrats and the Republicans are periodically winning a majority against each other.

In non-democratic countries the question does not arise. It is true that at some stage of national evolution preceding the democratic age the permanent minorities tended to be excluded from political power, for instance, the Roman Catholics in a Protestant country and *vice versa*, or the Jews in European countries. But with the growth of democracy, equality of all irrespective of race, culture and religion has been established.

There was, however, some substance in the Muslim case. India of the twentieth century had not reached the stage of social development of the 19th-century Europe. The mass of people were still living in the middle ages. Status still determined social structure and function. Occupations both among the Hindus and the Muslims were still hereditary. There was little mobility of labour or vocation. The higher castes hankered after state patronage, the educated Hindus and Muslims were largely attracted by Government services which were regarded honourable as well as profitable, and there was keen competition for them.

In business—wealth-producing activities, industry, banking, trade, the non-Muslims—Hindus and Parsis, held a near monopoly. The Muslims dreamed of the old days when the chief source of profit and influence was employment under government which under the Muslim rulers was easily available to the members of the community.

In agriculture the situation differed from province to province. In Bengal Hindus were predominant as landholders, the Muslims were largely either tillers of the soil or artisans. In Uttar Pradesh there was a large Muslim element among the landholders and urban occupations, they were relatively fewer among the rural agriculturists. In the Panjab again the Muslims dominated as landlords, especially in the western districts, but the Hindus were largely occupied in urban occupations. The small landholding class was strong.

Thus religion not only affected social classification, it influenced economic stratification and functional differentiation. It is not, then, surprising that politics which is concerned with economic affairs, occupations and professions, providing inducements to entrepreneurship, etc. should have acquired a religious slant.

The economic policies of Government tended to unduly prolong the process of social change and to preserve the medievel social stratification.

The misunderstanding in India which was demanding a democratic responsible government on the model of the Dominions of the British Commonwealth was due to the confusion between the two kinds of minorities and the belief that the permanent religious and cultural type was coincident with the temporary political type which constantly veered with changes of opinion on economic and political problems. It was forgotten that it was impossible for the Hindu community or any other community—major or minor—to agree *en masse* upon any programme of economic or political policies, for instance, taxation, tariff, protection or free trade, agriculture or industrial development, education, language, collectivism, individualism, etc. Therefore, neither all Hindus nor all Muslims could be members of one political party.

The confusion of ideas in treating the entire Muslim population of

India as a single political minority was responsible largely for the failure of the Round Table Conference and for the unspeakable tragedies which marked the history of subsequent years. The confusion still haunts the two nations and bedevils their relations.

Other factors—apart from the choice of the participants in the Conference and the misunderstanding of the issues involved, were also working against success. The world was in the throes of an unprecedented economic depression since 1929 which affected India's economy badly, augmented social strains and exacerbated individual tempers. The depression exercised influence on British politics too. As it grew in intensity it diverted attention away from the consideration of the Indian problem and changed the attitude of the party in power towards the Round Table discussions.

The Great Idea of Federation

On November 12, 1930, King George V inaugurated the first Round Table Conference. Among the audience were representatives of the British Parliament, Indian delegates, rulers of the Indian States, the High Commissioners of the Dominions as observers. The King in his address drew pointed attention to the presence of the representatives of the Governments in the sister states of the Commonwealth and justified their attendance. He was profoundly conscious "how much depends for the whole of the British Commonwealth on the issue of your consultations".

The most significant remarks in the address were two. The first was, "Ten years is but a brief span in the life of any nation, but the decade has witnessed... a quickening and growth in ideals and aspirations of Nationhood which defy the customary measurement of time." The second, "I have also in mind the just claims of majorities and minorities ... of the races, castes and creeds of which the body politic is composed."[5]

The first remark indicates that although the Congress organisation which was in the main responsible for "the quickening growth in ideals and aspirations of Nationhood in India" was not bodily present in the Conference, its spirit invisibly moved the mind of the participants in the gathering. For following the King almost every speaker referred to the urgency of doing something to placate the restless, heaving and panting India in order to forestall the catastrophe which loomed large as a result of the civil disobedience movement.

Everyone referred to the enormous change which had taken place in India, in the picturesque language of Muhammad Ali as if India had put on 'fifty-league boots'.

[5] *Indian Round Table Conference,* 12 November 1930—19 January 1931, Proceedings, pp. 11-12.

Nevertheless in order to apply a brake upon the conclusions which might be drawn from the fact of rapid advance, the Conference was reminded by the King of the impediments which blocked the progress towards the goal. These two formed the keynote of the proceedings of the Conference.

In the plenary session which followed from November 17 to November 21, a general discussion was held on the question, 'whether the future constitution of India should be on a federal or unitary basis'. This was undoubtedly the first and the most fundamental question, for on its solution depended the whole consideration of the constitutional problem.

Tej Bahadur Sapru who initiated the discussion on November 17 created a sensation by his remarkable speech, which changed the whole atmosphere of the Conference. He enunciated the idea of an Indian Federation which would consist of both the Indian Princely States and the provinces under British rule, and which could be embodied immediately in the Indian constitution to be framed by an Act of Parliament. This "great and mighty conception" (Reading) at which the Simon Commission had only hinted and the Government of India glanced as a remote possibility in future had suddenly become the urgent immediate step in laying the foundation of the constitution. The conception of one and united India took the Conference by storm.

Sapru appealed to the patriotism of the Princes to rise to the occasion and declare their assent to join the Federation. He pointed out to the British Parliamentary delegates and specially the Government representatives that federation logically involved responsible government, for the Princes who enjoyed internal autonomy and exercised responsibility in their own States could not become parts of a political system which was wholly devoid of responsibility.

The Maharaja of Bikaner on behalf of the Princely order expressed approval of the proposals for federation and self-government. Other Princes accepted the commitment. The Nawab of Bhopal endorsed the plea for the transfer of responsibility. He said, "We can only federate with a self-governing and federal British India."

The Muslim point of view was voiced by Jinnah and Shafi. Both welcomed federation and demanded a status of equality with the Dominions, but Jinnah entered a caveat. His words were, "Unless you create that sense of security among the minorities, which will secure a willing cooperation and allegiance to the state, no constitution that you may frame will work successfully."[6]

The First Round Table Conference made it abundantly clear that all Indians, irrespective of caste, party, community or interest, were

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

united in the demand for the transfer of responsibility to an Indian cabinet answerable to an elective legislature. Most agreed that for the transitional period some safeguards or reservation of powers was necessary.

Of the British delegation, Peel, a member of the Conservative Party, characterized the Simon Commission's recommendations as revolutionary and the transfer of responsibility at the Centre premature and harmful. Reading, the Liberal, was shaken; his Eastern imagination, for he was a Jew, was stirred. But he still clung to the thought that Dominion Status could not be considered practical politics, for both the Statutory Commission and the Government of India had disapproved of it, and the difficulties in the way were unsurmountable.

MacDonald's speech summarized the proceedings, formulated the practical problems which had to be tackled and pointed out the tests of a good constitution. But he expressed no opinion on the issues under debate.

Failure of the Minorities Committee

The plenary session was followed by the meetings of the committees constituted to discuss the different aspects of the tentative acceptance of the proposed Federation of India. Among these committees the one which was concerned with the structure and functions of the Federation agreed by and large on many basic features of the system, leaving the details for further consideration. The body frame of the new state was almost ready to receive the breath of life which could give it self-propelling energy. Unfortunately on this vital matter the committee—the Minorities Committee, failed, for it was unable to reconcile the claims of the majority and the minorities. The members of the Muslim delegation, the Aga Khan, Jinnah, Shafi and Fazlul Haq, and of the Sikh community, Sardar Ujjal Singh, gave repeated warnings that a constitution which did not safeguard the interests of the minorities and did not create a sense of security among them, would not be acceptable to them. As these minorities constituted nearly twenty-five per cent of the Indian population it was obvious that the constitution could not function smoothly without their assent. On the solution of this basic problem depended the whole future of India's politics or it seemed so. The ideal of a united India which the Conference envisaged could only assume real form if the different communities of India could will to federate.

Muhammad Ali, the whilom companion and follower of Gandhiji in the non-cooperation movement of 1920-22, who broke away from the Congress in December 1928 to become the vehement champion of Muslim rights, explained the cause of the Hindu-Muslim dissensions in these words:

"The only quarrel between the Hindus and the Muslims today is a quarrel that the Muslim is afraid of Hindu domination and the Hindu, I suppose, is afraid of Muslim domination. I want to get rid of that fear."

He asserted, "Where God commands I am a Musalman first, a Musalman second, and a Musalman last, and nothing but a Musalman. If you ask me to enter into your Empire or into your Nation by leaving that synthesis, that polity, that culture, that ethics (which is Islam), I will not do it.... But where India is concerned, where India's freedom is concerned, where the welfare of India is concerned, I am an Indian first, an Indian second, an Indian last and nothing but an Indian. I belong to two circles of equal size, but which are not concentric: one is India, and the other is the Muslim world."[7]

For the Muslim delegates' attitude at the Conference Fazli Husain was largely responsible.

What happened in London is related by Setalvad. He wrote:

"... After we reached London well in advance of the date fixed for the Round Table Conference, it was arranged that some representatives of Hindus and of Muslims should meet to consider the question of a communal settlement. Sapru, Sastri, myself, Jayakar, Moonje and Ambedkar were deputed for this meeting and the Aga Khan, Jinnah and one other gentleman represented the Muslims. The meetings were held at the residence of H.H. the Nawab of Bhopal and we met night after night continuously for several days. H.H. the Nawab of Bhopal was very helpful and was anxious that a settlement should be arrived at. When we first met, I put the question to the Aga Khan, whether if we arrived at a satisfactory settlement on other points, he would agree to joint electorates. He said: 'If you satisfy our demands on all other matters we would agree to joint electorates with reservation of seats for Muslims.' I put a further question, 'If we came to a settlement on all matters including joint electorates, will the Muslim delegates support the national demand at the Conference?' His answer was characteristic. He said, 'In that event you lead and we follow.'

"Then we asked him what were their demands for settlement. He then stated that the principal demands were that they wanted Sind and the N.W. Frontier Province to be made separate provinces, that in the provincial legislature, the Muslims should have a reasonable weightage and that in the Central Legislature, the Muslims should have one-third of the total number of seats. At that time the idea of Federation with the States sending their representatives to the Central Legislature was not contemplated. Sapru, Sastri and myself would have agreed

[7] Setalvad, Chimanlal, *Recollections and Reflections* (1946), pp. 95-96.

immediately to these demands and secured joint electorates. We were, however, seriously disappointed in the attitude of Jayakar and Moonje. We first took up the question of Sind being made a separate province. Jayakar and Moonje brought forward various conditions which in their view should be fulfilled before Sind could be made a separate province. We occupied several evenings on this one question alone.

"The discussion on other points dragged on for many nights. In the meantime, reactionary elements among the Muslim delegates in London as well as reactionary Muslims in India, getting scent of what was happening at our meetings, got busy and pressure was brought to bear upon the Muslim representatives at our small conference. Ultimately, one night the Aga Khan said that the matter was now out of his hands and he felt he could not bind the Muslim representatives by any agreement that he would like to enter into. A great opportunity was thus lost. If Sapru, Sastri and myself could have helped it, we would have at once conceded the demands of Aga Khan and made him and other Muslim representatives sign for joint electorates. If this had happened, the subsequent political history of India would have taken a different turn."[8]

When Fazli Husain received the news that some Muslim delegates were exploring conditions under which joint electorates would be acceptable to the Muslims, he severely upbraided them and bluntly asked them, "The Turkish Nation was ruined over and over again by their Pashas. Is the Indian Muslim community going to be ruined by the Muslim delegates to the Round Table Conference?"[9]

At the same time he threatened, if separate electorates were taken away, weightage for Muslims in minority provinces done away with and the Panjab and Bengal denied a bare majority, "I and with me a large number of Muslims will feel called upon to try our luck in the political reconstruction of India through the Congress rather than submit to gradual obliteration through the proposed reformed constitution."[10]

With such rigid attitudes on the one side and equally strong belief in the unity of culture, society and nationality on the other, there is little wonder that reason felt helpless against sentiment, and in the absence of Hindu-Muslim accord the other important decisions were merely recorded without formal acceptance.

Muslims Block Advance

The proceedings were wound up by the Prime Minister Ramsay

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[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 358-59.

[9] Azim Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 256. Letter dated December 22, 1930 to Dr. Shafaat Ahmad Khan.

[10] *Ibid.*

MacDonald. Regarding the communal difficulty he affirmed that the attitude of the British Government was "nothing more than an overpowering desire to leave you to settle your own affairs." Addressing the minorities he explained, "We can put in the constitution that this disability may not be put upon you, that the next disability may not be put upon you. Believe me, after some experience in these things, ultimately it depends upon the intelligence of your people, it depends upon their organisation, it depends upon their strength of will, it depends upon the success of their leadership as to whether words become deeds and declarations sanctions."[11]

But he assured them concerning the safeguards: "If you fail to agree to set up your own safeguards, to come to a settlement between yourselves regarding those safeguards, the Government will have to provide in the constitution provisions designed to help you."[12]

Concerning the character of the new constitution he announced the decision of the Government as follows:

"The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights."[13]

He also declared that the Government "had taken note of the fact that the deliberations of the Conference have proceeded on the basis, accepted by all parties, that the Central Government should be a federation of all India, embracing both the Indian States and British India in a bicameral legislature."[14] He visualized some form of dyarchy at the Centre and full responsibility in the provinces.

The Indian delegates had started their journey from India amidst unpopular demonstrations. They were uncertain of the future, unsure of themselves and doubtful of British intentions, they were haunted with the fear of returning home without a settlement. Fortunately the opening sessions of the Conference transformed their mood, the sky seemed to clear and optimism prevailed. But their meetings in the closing stage of the Conference gave a shock to their confidence and hope alternated with despair. Doubts again besieged their minds, as the minorities question remained unsettled. In order to understand what transpired at the open proceedings of the Conference and its

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[11] *Indian Round Table Conference,* November 12, 1930—January 19, 1931, *Proceedings,* pp. 476-77.

[12] *Ibid.,* pp. 478-79.

[13] *Ibid.,* p. 482.

[14] *Ibid.*

committees it is necessary to consider what influences worked behind the scenes.

There were two different schools of thought among the British ruling class. Wedgwood Benn writing to Irwin told him, "There are, it seems to me, two distinct views about our relations with the Moslems, the first is that by concessions to them we can keep them on our side in support of British domination."[15] The other school believed in following the difficult and hazardous course, namely, "to try and assist in an understanding between the Moslems and the Hindus."[16]

In a subsequent communication Benn added, "We recognise that we have a duty to minorities but the trusteeship must not be exploited in any way against the interest of the majority. This is to say, while we cannot go away and tell the minorities to make the best terms they can with a powerful majority, we do not intend, on the other hand, to remain and deprive the majority of its rights, relying ourselves upon the support of one or more minorities. To put it another way, although we recognise the value of the support of the minorities, we will resist the temptation to coerce or bribe them to give that support at the expense of what the majority ought to have."[17]

The second school, to which Benn and Irwin belonged, with all their sweet reasonableness lost the battle to the first school of which the champions were Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Samuel Hoare and the hardliners of the Tory Party like Austen Chamberlain about whom Benn's opinion was that "he seemed to fail completely to understand what the situation in India was at the present time and what policy was required to meet it."[18]

It is interesting to note that the Minorities Committee which considered the problem of Hindu-Muslim settlement consisted of all the Muslim delegates of British India to the Conference with the exception of two—Jinnah and Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah. They were all communal leaders. The Hindu majority in India was represented in the Committee by an equal number of Hindu delegates—if the two members of the Depressed Classes are excluded. Jinnah who had advocated joint electorates in 1927 was left out because he was considered unreliable.

The Hindu Mahasabha was represented by two members—Moonje and Raja Narendra Nath. The three British parties were represented equally by two members each. The composition of the Committee could hardly be regarded as propitious. When it is realized that

[15] *Irwin Papers*: Letters from the Secretary of State, Vol. V, May 29, 1930.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.* Letter from Wedgwood Benn to the Viceroy, June 20, 1930.

[18] *Ibid.*, July 4, 1930.

powerful agencies were exerting their pull from outside it is not surprising that success was not achieved.

What these agencies were can be easily guessed. But it is remarkable that a number of young students of the Cambridge University in England about this time, and Muhammad Iqbal who presided over the Muslim League session at Allahabad in December 1930, put forward their schemes for a Muslim State which later matured into the idea of full-fledged Pakistan.

The letters of the Secretary to the Viceroy are an index of the changing atmosphere. The earlier letters are full of agreeable surprise at the emergence of the ideal of a federated greater India, which would accelerate the achievement of an Indian Dominion with full autonomy in the provinces and transfer of responsibility with certain reservations at the Centre. On November 20, he wrote, "Things at the Round Table have gone ahead at an unexpected pace." On the 24th, he gave his impressions of the Conference. "The Press (Garvin of the *Observer* and Dawson of the *Times*) were sympathetic, Peel was moving, Reading was on the run. The Indian Liberals were strongly in favour, the Muhammadans were supporting and the Indian Princes were defending the decisions." But all this satisfaction was not without a sense of disquiet and possible danger, for there was a fly in the ointment.

On November 29, Benn gave a catalogue of the difficulties which faced the Conference. Among them there were some which referred to the British and others to the Princes. But the main difficulty was the problem of the minorities, and in particular, the Hindu-Muslim antagonism. About the last he said, "it is quite clear that things are at a dead end here", but he hoped "goodwill is not likely to be upset, although Winston Churchill and Lloyd will make a speech in the city in a few days" and what they call "prick and bubble".[19]

On December 15, the outlook was gloomy. Benn wrote, "The minorities question is unsettled and there is very little sign of its being settled. The Muslims are pretending that Government are bringing pressure to bear on them. That is not true. The Hindus, as represented by Moonje, really are not in a state of compromise, and Sapru and Jinnah are in a state of despair."[20]

His explanation of the Muslim attitude is, "Indeed the Moslems have been going round, seeking the opposition parties on their own, in order to beg them not to let them (the Moslems) down."[21]

Benn's remedy was: "I am coming myself to think that we ought to make the declaration (of Government's intention) independent of

[19] *Ibid.*, November 29, 1930.
[20] *Ibid.*, December 15, 1930.
[21] *Ibid.*

a religious settlement, and, in view of what Lothian told me, and what I have already reported to you, I think that we shall be able to make such a declaration, that would really answer in the affirmative the questions which were put to you by Gandhi in November last year."[22]

Edward Thompson, an interested spectator of the Conference proceedings, wrote : "During the Round Table Conference there was a rather obvious understanding and alliance between the more intransigent Moslems and certain particularly undemocratic British political circles."[23]

The non possumus attitude of the Muslim delegates is explained by the following extract from the Diary of Fazli Husain:

"News from Round Table Conference indicates that Labour Government made attempts to make Muslims agree to some sort of joint electorates. Shafi, Bhopal, Sultan Ahmad, Fazlul Haq, Hidayatullah were ready for the game, but others were against it. Muhammad Ali was also helping and no doubt Jinnah too, though himself remaining in the background. I had to take strong action and the situation has just been saved. We must keep our present weightage in six provinces and Centre and separate electorates and have majority in Bengal and the Punjab through separate electorates. Let Hindus non-co-operate and let us build up sufficient strength during the next ten years."[24]

Again he noted, "The Muslim position at the Round Table Conference is deteriorating and I must do something to put it right. I cannot let my life's work be spoilt."[25] He admonished the Muslim delegates for saying "Amen to all general platitudes about advance and obtaining full responsible Government and Dominion Status and so on, in order to loom large in the English public press and in their own minds, and in trying to establish their own reputation for patriotism, for being non-communal and for being obliging to the Labour Government."[26]

He asked them, "Why should Muslims, who are politically, educationally and economically weaker in the country pretend that by ousting the British power from India and by introducing responsibility they stand to gain so much that, for it, they are prepared to sacrifice communal interests ?"[27]

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22 *Ibid.*

23 Thompson, E., *Enlist India for Freedom*, p. 50.

24 Fazli Husain, Diary, December 3, 1930. Quoted by Azim Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 254, note 3.

25 Fazli Husain, Diary, December 21, 1930. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 255(From the letter dated December 20, 1930, to Dr. Shafaat Ahmad Khan).

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 255-56.

These admonitions had the desired effect, and the Muslims insisted on the solution of their claims first before agreeing upon the constitution of the provinces and the Federal Centre. The reactionary Muslims in India were not the only party frightened by a probable agreement on the Hindu-Muslim question. The bureaucracy in India was equally frightened and so was the reactionary British Conservative Party.

The declaration contemplated by the Secretary of State was made by the Prime Minister at the close of the first Round Table Conference. It announced the view of His Majesty's Government regarding the structure and powers of the reformed Government, but it did not indicate how these ideas would be converted into deeds, in case the Hindus and the Muslims failed to arrive at a settlement by themselves. It did not promise that the rights of the majority would not be obstructed by the veto of a minority, as Wedgwood Benn desired.

Among the Indian Liberal delegates the optimists still believed that the main object had been achieved, and that the Government had committed itself to the establishment of a federal responsible government in the immediate future. The only hurdle that remained, *viz.*, the communal settlement, was bound to be solved. But others were not so sure of the future.

Among them were the Muslim delegates. According to a Muslim historian, "Muslims went away from the first Conference with the impression that the British Government was more interested in Hindu aspirations than in Muslim apprehensions and that insufficient attention had been paid to their wishes and to their power to make these wishes effective. Ramsay MacDonald's speech at the close of the session, delivered on 19 January 1931, was particularly resented by them as a tactless slight upon their community."[28]

The resentment was due to the suggestion made by the Prime Minister that the question of safeguards for the Muslim community "was the kind of thing which had better be settled by Hindus and Muslims together" and impliedly not by the third party, namely, the British Government.

Iqbal had already condemned the plan of federation envisaged at the Round Table Conference. He said:

"The truth of the matter is that participation of Indian princes among whom only a few are Muslims in a federation scheme serves a double purpose.... The scheme appears to be aiming at a kind of understanding between Hindu India and British imperialism. You perpetuate me in India and I, in turn, give you a Hindu oligarchy to keep all other Indian communities in perpetual subjection."[29]

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[28] Aziz, K. K., *The Making of Pakistan*, p. 44.

[29] Saiyid, M. H., *Mohammed Ali Jinnah*, p. 481.

Before the Conference closed the Muslim delegates made a statement, "We feel that the only course that is consistent alike with the position of our community and its peculiar needs and the smooth working of the new constitution... is to reiterate our claim that no advance is possible or practicable, whether in the Provinces or in the Central Government, without adequate safeguards for the Muslims of India, and that no constitution will be acceptable to the Muslims of India without such safeguards."[30]

Nor were the Indian bureaucrats pleased. Hailey who attended the Conference in a consultative capacity wrote to the Viceroy :

"Really this has, in some respects, hardly been a conference at all. Judged at all events from the somewhat prejudiced view of one who has taken a pride in the British connection with India, it has simply afforded a lamentable spectacle of constant and one-sided attacks on British rule. When there have been gross misstatements of facts, it has been no one's duty to answer them. The jackals have been left to scream perpetually, without a single bark from the watchdog."[31]

Congress Response to Conference

While the First Round Table Conference was meeting in London, the civil disobedience campaign was running its turbulent course, which baffled the Government. At first it was ridiculed and reviled, it was fondly expected that it would soon peter out, and sober and reasonable politicians would succeed in convincing the country about the futility of non-cooperation and refusal to pay taxes. But as its progress belied the expectations and calculations of Government, stern measures were adopted in order to crush it. All the batteries of repression were let loose—punitive ordinances, police charges with lathis and bullets, whipping and collective fines, bans against Congress organisations, arrests of leaders, confiscation of presses and lands, prohibition of demonstrations, processions and meetings, and so on.

All the provinces were affected. Hindus joined the movement in large numbers and thousands of them filled the jails. A large number of Muslims followed the lead of Gandhiji—Abbas Tyabji, Abul Kalam Azad, Ansari, Syed Mahmud, Tasadduq Ahmed Khan Sherwani, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the organiser of the volunteer corps, known as the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. At his call the overwhelmingly Muslim province of the North-West Frontier and a number of Pathan tribes rose in defiance against the Government and fought for Indian independence. A number of Muslim organisations—Jamiat-ul-Ulama, Ahrarul Islam, the nationalist Muslim Party, offered great sacrifices.

30 Coupland, R., *The Indian Problem*, Part I, p. 121.

31 The Earl of Birkenhead—*Halifax*, pp. 292-93.

The masses in the towns and villages, the workers and peasants, responded with amazing ardour. Many men of wealth and property gave their support and even Government officials were affected, so that Government had to warn them, and threaten them with dire consequences.

The share of Indian women in the movement was remarkable. Illiterate women, *purdah* women, young and old, came out in large numbers to face the wrath of Government. It was a war of will to suffer on the part of the one party against brute force bent on terrorisation on the part of the other. The orders of Gandhiji to remain non-violent, to suffer violence but not to retaliate, were carried out by and large. But as the open agitation was mercilessly punished, restraint became difficult, specially as the leaders were placed behind the bars.

The terrorists in Bengal raised their head. They revived the old plan of collecting arms, plundering treasuries and perpetrating revolutionary activity. They raided the Chittagong armouries of the police and the railway volunteers. At the one end, the arrest of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan led to shooting in Peshawar, the mutiny of the Royal Garhwal Rifles, and the ten-day occupation of the city by the rebels.

Nor did the removal of Gandhiji, the supreme commander, to prison put an end to the campaign. The boycott continued and official atrocities went on undiminished. There was turmoil and commotion in Lahore, Calcutta, Bombay and martial law in Bombay and Sholapur. In the Frontier Province the army was mobilized and the air force put into action.

Economic distress had added fuel to the political fire. There were strikes in the factories and a movement in the Uttar Pradesh villages for non-payment of rents. In Gujarat a no-tax campaign was planned. Government resorted to coercive measures to realize revenue. Thousands of acres of land were confiscated, hundreds of village officials were dismissed. The aboriginals of the Central Provinces defied the forest laws, and the peasants of Karnatak and Kanara vied with one another in making sacrifices and inviting privations and suffering.

Brailsford in his report to the *Manchester Guardian* related :

"The charges which responsible Indian leaders make against the police range in space and time over vast areas which defy investigation. Everywhere one heard complaints about the brutality of the police in dispersing prohibited meetings. I heard much to this effect from an English eye-witness and from Indian doctors who attended the injured. I also questioned the Police officers. My conclusion was that in most of these cases the mistake lay with the higher officials who prohibited the meetings."

About the participants in the movement he wrote : "To face the

lathi charges became a point of honour, and in a spirit of martyrdom volunteers went out in hundreds to be beaten. They gave a display of disciplined passive courage. Again and again I heard descriptions by Europeans of the beating of slight and perfectly passive youths by burly constables which made one almost physically sick. I should not care to repeat the comments of a French lady who saw one of these scenes."[32]

He gave instances of police atrocities in Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore, Contai in Bengal, Meerut, villages of Gujarat (Bardoli and Kheda districts). His conclusion was, "The great mass of the population is not in a normal state of mind. It has been roused to a high pitch of sustained exaltation, it has been goaded, gentle though it is, to anger, it doubts our sincerity, and above all, it is passionately devoted to its imprisoned leaders.... So long, indeed as Gandhi is in prison, I doubt whether the main body of his movement will abandon, or even slacken, its resistance."[33]

In fact the movement had greatly succeeded both in its aim to elevate the moral stature of the people and to destroy the political prestige of Government. It damaged British economic interests by reducing Indian imports—especially of textiles and yarn nearly by 31 to 45 per cent.

Gandhi-Irwin Pact

By the end of 1930, the British had realized that without conciliating the Congress, whose influence had proved to be all pervading, no settlement was possible. The *Times* correspondent had warned, "No Indian delegation without Gandhi, the two Nehrus, Malaviya or Patel could possibly be looked on as representative."

Wedgwood Benn had suggested to the Viceroy the desirability of inducing Gandhiji to attend the Round Table Conference. When, therefore, Sapru appealed to the Prime Minister in the valedictory meeting of the Conference to show clemency and release the prisoners, he was in fact preaching to the converted. MacDonald responded with alacrity and promised to reciprocate generously if the Congress retraced its steps and abandoned the movement.

On January 17, 1931, the Viceroy prepared the ground for rapprochement with a persuasive speech in the Indian Legislative Assembly. He said : "However mistaken any man may think him to be, and however deplorable may appear the results of the policy associated with his name, no one can fail to recognise the spiritual force

[32] Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, *The History of the Congress*. Vol. I (quotations from the *Manchester Guardian*, January 12, 1931), pp. 687-91.

[33] *Ibid.*

which impels Mr. Gandhi to count no sacrifice too great in the cause, as he believes, of the India he loves."[34]

He asked whether it was not possible for the Congress in the new circumstances created by the civil disobedience movement in India and the proceedings of the Round Table Conference in England to follow a different course.[35]

On January 26, 1931, just a week after the appeal, Gandhiji and the members of the Working Committee of the Congress were let out of prison, and the Congress Working Committee was released from the ban. Gandhiji speaking at Bombay after leaving Yeravda prison told the audience, "I am hankering after peace, if it can be had with honour."[36] Then he reiterated the demands whose satisfaction was the precondition of peace—the substance of independence and the fulfilment of the eleven points which he had communicated to the Viceroy before starting the Salt Satyagraha.

The Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad on February 1 and took stock of the situation. Its view of the work of the Round Table Conference was that the achievement did not justify the stoppage of the movement, but no new campaign need be organised. The resolution was, however, not published, awaiting the return of the Conference delegates.

Of the most important decisions of the Conference, namely, the formation of the Indian Federation consisting of the whole of India—Indian India and British India, the lineaments were somewhat obscure, and the content and constitution of the Federation lacked precision. The second and equally vital matter was the transfer of responsibility at the Centre. Its formulation by MacDonald did not satisfy the Congress leaders that the offer measured up to the Congress demand. Jawaharlal's opinion, undoubtedly a rather extreme view, was "that the R.T.C. decisions had not the least value".[37]

The awaited members of the Round Table Conference—Sapru, Jayakar and Sastri, arrived at Allahabad on February 8, and held discussions with Gandhiji and other members of the Congress Working Committee till February 14. Although they had nothing new to tell, on their suggestion Gandhiji agreed to interview the Viceroy. According to Jawaharlal, "he agreed to do so, although I do not think that he expected much in the way of result. But, on principle he was always willing to go out of his way to meet and discuss anything with his opponents. Being absolutely convinced of the rightness of his own position he hoped to convince the other party, but it was perhaps

[34] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1931, Vol. I, p. 127.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. III (1969 reprint), p. 50.
[37] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography* (1953 reprint), p. 249.

something more than intellectual conviction that he aimed at. He was always after a psychological change, a breaking of barriers, of anger and distrust, an approach to the other's goodwill and fine feelings. He knew that if the change took place, conviction became far easier, or even if there was no conviction, opposition was toned down and the sting was taken out of conflicts."[38]

Moved by such considerations, Gandhiji sought an interview with the Viceroy, who immediately informed the Secretary of State that he had decided to see Gandhiji. He explained that his strategy in the talks would be to play on Gandhiji's characteristic "vanity of power and personality". Sastri had told him, "He is like a woman; you have to win him; therefore before you see him perform all your ablutions, say all your prayers and put on your deepest spiritual robes."[39]

Gandhiji who had told Sastri, "I wish to be conquered", met Irwin on February 17 and their talks continued with intervals till March 5, 1931. Irwin was immensely impressed with his strange visitor. He described to the King his opinion in these words : "I was conscious of a very powerful personality, and this independent of physical endowment, which indeed is unfavourable. Small, wizened, rather emaciated, no front teeth, it is a personality very poorly adorned with this world's trimmings. And yet you cannot help feeling the force of character behind the deep little eyes and immensely active and acutely working mind."[40]

On the night of March 4, the agreement was drawn up and at noon the next day it was signed. It was agreed :

(1) As regards constitutional questions, Federation was admitted as the essential basis, and Indian responsibility with safeguards as necessary.

(2) The Congress would be invited to participate in the discussions of the Conference.

(3) Civil disobedience would be discontinued, which meant organised defiance of law, non-payment of land revenue and other legal dues, publication of news-sheets in support of civil disobedience, attempt to influence civil and military servants and village officials against Government would be given up.

(4) Regarding the boycott of British goods, the encouragement of Indian industries by propaganda was permitted, but boycott as a political weapon would be eschewed.

(5) Picketing employed in furtherance of boycott of foreign goods or consumption of liquor would not be allowed outside the limits permitted by law.

[38] *Ibid.*
[39] The Earl of Birkenhead—*Halifax,* p. 296.
[40] *Ibid.,* p. 299.

(6) Gandhiji's suggestion for enquiry into the police excesses was considered undesirable.

(7) Ordinances promulgated in connection with the civil disobedience movement would be withdrawn.

(8) Notifications declaring associations unlawful would be withdrawn.

(9) Pending prosecutions would be withdrawn, except in cases of offences involving violence.

(10) Prisoners not charged with violence would be released.

(11) Fines would be remitted.

(12) Moveable property seized in connection with the movement, if in the possession of Government, or forfeited or attached in connection with the realization of land revenue would be returned.

(13) Immoveable property would be returned, but property sold to third parties would be regarded as finally disposed of.

(14) Cases of Government officers who had resigned would be reviewed, but posts permanently filled up would not be restored to original incumbents.

(15) In the event of Congress failing to give full effect to the obligations of the agreement, Government would take what action it deemed necessary.

In his statement to the Press on the conclusion of the settlement Gandhiji refrained from describing it as a victory for the Congress, if anything it was a victory both for the Government and the people. He praised the heroic effort of the masses who underwent great suffering in the struggle and advised them during the coming days to wait, watch, pray and hope. He warned, "Suffering has its well-defined limits. Suffering can be both wise and unwise, and, when the limit is reached, to prolong it would be not wise but the height of folly."[41]

The Gandhi-Irwin agreement required the approval of the Congress before it could be fully implemented. So the Congress was convened at Karachi on March 29, 1931. Vallabhbhai Patel presided. There was tremendous enthusiasm and jubilation at the gathering, but a note of sorrow and grief was struck by the news of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi's martyrdom during the Hindu-Muslim riots at Kanpur, and of indignation and sorrow at the execution of Bhagat Singh and his colleagues, Rajguru and Sukhdev, for the murder of Saunders at Lahore in 1928.

The resolution for the ratification of the Gandhi-Irwin settlement d was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru. It reiterated the Congress demand for *Purna Swaraj* (Complete Independence) and the right of either party to end the partnership at will. But the resolution committed the Congress to participate in the Round Table Conference and allowed its

[41] Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 748.

delegates freedom to accept such adjustments as might be necessary in the interests of India. By the same resolution Gandhiji was appointed the sole representative of the Congress.

Gandhiji in winding up the discussion explained that as a *Satyagrahi* (lover of truth and non-violence) he could not refuse the invitation of the British Prime Minister and the Viceroy of India to attend the Conference, although "sometimes I have felt within myself what is there in this Conference after all, and of what use it will be."[42] He also stated, "It would be useless for the Congress delegation, if we cannot possibly arrive at a proper communal solution, to proceed to England."[43]

The motion of Jawaharlal was carried practically unanimously.

The Congress at Karachi had given its decision both in regard to the political demand, and its representation solely by Gandhiji. Gandhiji, however, realised the enormous difficulties of the responsibility cast on him. He told the correspondent of a British newspaper, "My coming (to England) is contingent upon certain circumstances, two of which are satisfactory working of the settlement and solution of the communal question."[44]

The settlement was an agreement made by two high-minded persons of a compromising disposition who were desirous of peace. But it was difficult to say how far their followers and dependants were prepared to translate the decision into action. It was clear that there had been little noticeable change of heart on either side. Both distrusted each other profoundly.

The decision of the Karachi Congress in ratifying the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and in agreeing to participate in the Round Table Conference was received with misgivings in many quarters.

Jawaharlal Nehru was depressed, and wrote, "So I lay and pondered on that March night, and in my heart there was a great emptiness as of something precious gone, almost beyond recall.

This is the way the world ends,
Not with a bang, but a whimper."[45]

Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Congress, thought the Conference would prove abortive, but believed "by going to London Gandhiji would lose nothing, in fact he would be able to beard the lion in his own den".[46]

On the other side, the British bureaucracy in India resented Irwin's treatment of Gandhiji. They argued, "The very fact that the highest

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[42] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1931, Vol. I, pp. 272-73.
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 123.
[45] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography* (1953), p. 259.
[46] Tahmankar, D. V., *Sardar Patel*, p. 130.

authority of the British Government in India and the representative of the Crown, had entered into an agreement with the renowned leader of the proscribed organisation, by a complex mental process, created an illusion of triumph and a concomitant spirit of defiance."[47]

Before Gandhiji's departure Willingdon had succeeded Irwin in April 1931, and Samuel Hoare assumed the post of the Secretary of State for India in August 1931, in the National Government which replaced the Labour administration. The new combination of a Liberal administrator with long experience of government in India and Canada and the Conservative imperialist, doubtful of India's fitness for self-government, changed the complexion of government policy so far followed by Benn and Irwin.

The new Viceroy disapproved of the earlier approach to Gandhi. He wrote to Hoare, "I and my government are getting rather alarmed at the fact that your predecessor (Wedgwood Benn) seemed rather anxious for us to give almost every position away, in a supreme effort to get Mr. Gandhi over to London."[48]

Concerning the Pact he observed : "It certainly has established a position in the minds of the people of the country that Gandhi had acted as a plenipotentiary in negotiating terms of peace with the Viceroy himself and that therefore there seemed to be two kings, of Brentford, in India."[49]

In the circumstances it appears questionable whether the decision of the Congress to send representatives to the Conference in London was wise. Gandhiji had rightly argued that he ought not to leave India without a previous satisfactory solution of two problems—(1) that the Round Table Conference would proceed to frame a constitution on the basis of Dominion Status, and (2) that the minorities problem would be settled and an agreement arrived at.

The Congress Working Committee should have known that these two conditions were fundamental and that the Round Table Conference was so constituted as to rule out a compromise. The Indian delegates were so chosen as to defeat the Congress claims. The British attached such an exaggerated importance to their separatist narrow interests as to make any accommodation impossible. If the Conference had met in India most of the Indian delegates would have been cut to size and to some extent shielded from the evil counsels of powerful reactionaries in England. The overwhelming nationalistic atmosphere of India would have restrained them from the open pursuit of particularistic aims.

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[47] Victor Trench, *Lord Willingdon in India*, p. 185.

[48] *Templewood (Samuel Hoare) Papers*: From Willingdon to S. Hoare, August 28, 1931.

[49] *Ibid.*

What was not known to Gandhiji but what a realist politician should have anticipated was the effect of the change of Government in England. So far as the advance at the Centre was concerned it was made dependent on the accession of the Princes, which was never enthusiastically pursued by the Government of India—the indifferent Governor-General and the hostile bureaucracy. The transfer of responsibility was so hedged with reservations and safeguards that only the semblance and not the substance of power was conceded. And it was placed under the double veto of Princes and Muslims.

The Conservatives-dominated Government exploited both plentifully.

Then Gandhiji's frank and straightforward dealings placed him at a disadvantage when pitted against politicians who excelled Machiavelli and Talleyrand in the arts of diplomacy and dissimulation.

So far as the Muslim question was concerned Gandhiji did make a last-minute effort before leaving India for the Conference to arrive at a settlement. He met at Bhopal in May 1931 the representatives of the Muslim Conference and the Muslim Nationalists. But the meeting failed to achieve any result. The All-India Muslim Conference had a month earlier, in April, indicated the terms on which it would accept a constitution of the federal type. It demanded : (1) the autonomy of the constituent units, (2) complete residuary powers for the provinces, (3) transfer of power from Parliament to the provinces, (4) federal subjects to be selected with the mutual consent of the provinces, (5) no difference in the powers of the British provinces and the Indian States, (6) one-third of seats in the Federal legislative chamber, (7) guarantee of Muslim majorities in the legislatures of Muslim majority provinces, (8) separate communal electorates, (9) Muslim members in all cabinets, central as well as provincial, (10) no legislation on communal matters if three quarters of the members of a community objected.[50]

Fazli Husain firmly opposed the reduction of the demands of the Muslim Conference, especially regarding separate electorates. Gandhiji had attended the annual session of the Jamiatul-Ulama held on April 1 at Karachi, condemned the shameful rioting at Agra, Banaras, Mirzapur and Kanpur, and appealed to the learned theologians to help in the eradication of the poison of communalism.

In the second week of July the Congress Working Committee met at Bombay and assured the Muslims and Sikhs that no solution of the minorities problem in any future constitution would be acceptable to the Congress that did not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned.

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[50] The *Times*, April 14, 1931, cited in Philips and Wainwright, *The Partition of India*, pp. 64-65.

Then the statement of the scheme of minority rights was adopted, which comprised the following points :[51]

1. Guarantee in Fundamental Rights for :
   (a) the protection of culture, language, script, education, profession and practice of religion and religious endowments,
   (b) the protection of personal laws,
   (c) the protection of political and other rights under the jurisdiction of the Federal government.
2. Adult franchise.
3. (a) Joint electorates.
   (b) Reservation of seats for the Hindus in Sind, the Muslims in Assam and the Sikhs in the Panjab and NWF Province, and for Hindus and Muslims wherever they were less than 25 per cent in population; and in the Federal and provincial legislatures on the basis of population with the right to contest additional seats.
4. Appointment to the government services by non-party Public Services Commissions with due regard to efficiency as well as equal opportunity and a fair share in the services to communal minorities.
5. Recognition of interests of minorities in the formation of cabinets at the Centre and in the provinces.
6. Uplifting the status of NWF Province and Baluchistan to that of the other provinces.
7. Separation of Sind.
8. Constituting India as a Federal state, with residuary powers vesting in the federating units.

The adoption of the Working Committee's resolution by the Congress at Karachi was tantamount to the acceptance of the 14 points of Jinnah with the exception of one, namely, reservation of 33 1/3 per cent representation to the Muslims in the Federal legislature (point 3).

Although the statement marked a departure in the attitude of the Congress over December 1928, unfortunately it came too late. Then Jinnah had requested the Congress to agree only to his five points which on refusal he had expanded to fourteen in January 1929. But by 1930, as a result of the declaration of independence by the Congress without any reference to the Muslim League and the subsequent launching of civil disobedience movement, the mind of a majority of Muslims had been completely alienated

Muslim Demands Reiterated

The Muslims reacted to the transactions of the Round Table Con-

[51] *Ibid.*

ference and the speech of the Prime Minister in Parliament sharply. The Working Committee of the All-India Muslim Conference which met at New Delhi on February 7, 1931 expressed its inability to accord its approval to the Prime Minister's declaration (of 19th January), rejected the proposal of the federal structure as conceived by the Conference, asserted its disappointment at the failure to find an equitable and just settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question, condemned the speech of the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on December 2, on the ground that it treated the Muslim demand for separate electorates in a flippant and offensive manner, and called upon the Muslims to be prepared to resort to any action deemed necessary for asserting their just demands.

A special session of the Muslim Conference was held on April 5, at New Delhi. The President of the session, Shaukat Ali, declared that the Muslims stood for Jinnah's 14 points, and assured the audience that he was glad to notice a new feeling among the British people for winning the goodwill of Muslims in general. He reminded the Muslims that they had ruled India for 850 years and asked them to realise that the future must be worthy of their past.

The Muslim League passed resolutions endorsing the demands by the Muslim Conference held on January 1, 1929 (Jinnah's 14 points), with some modifications.

The Muslim communalists' approach to the question of Federation was investigated by a *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, who reported in June 1931 :

"The Moslems see that the new federal Government, if and when it comes into existence, will have a large Hindu majority. The entrance of the States has increased the majority, for the States are chiefly Hindu. There is a strong tendency to counteract the permanent majority by trying to form a large northern bloc of provinces which will be Moslem, and in which the Hindus will be, as it were, hostages for the good behaviour of their co-religionists in the centre and the South. . . . Many Muslims do not believe in the permanence of a Federal India and they foresee a Moslem state in the north stretching from Karachi to north Bengal. This idea may help to explain their insistence on . . . the separation of Sind. . . that the Moslem N.W.F.P. should become an ordinary province. . . and the securing of a permanent majority in the Panjab, and if possible in Bengal."[52]

The British Cabinet probed the communal aspect of the Federal Union and concluded, it was a "question whether the Muslim provinces, or the provinces in which the Muslims hope to consolidate their power,

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[52] Moore, R. J., "The Making of India's Paper Federation, 1927-35", in Philips and Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

should be under any degree of control from a centre which will be predominantly Hindu."[53]

The creation of a Muslim India was even in 1931 under the consideration of Government. Was the wish in this case father to the thought?

The All-India Muslim Nationalist Conference was held at Lucknow on April 15, under the presidency of Ali Imam. He described separate electorates as a negation of nationalism and warned against conditions and reservations which would give no protection. The Conference resolved on the settlement of the Muslim question on the basis of: (1) joint electorates, (2) adult franchise, (3) provision of fundamental rights guaranteeing culture, language, script, education, religion and economic interests, (4) a federal constitution in which residuary powers would vest in the units, (5) appointment to services by a Public Services Commission, without giving monopoly in lower services to any community, (6) separation of Sind, (7) placing North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan on the same footing as all other provinces, (8) reservation of seats in the Federation and provincial legislatures on a population basis.

The Muslims no longer thought of themselves in terms of a minority community but as a nationality. Iqbal had formulated already his theory of a separate Muslim nationality—Muslim *millat*.

This was the third stage in the development of their separatist consciousness. The process had begun with Syed Ahmad Khan who awakened the sense of distinction between Hindu and Muslim political interests, although he never realized the logical consequences of this distinction. The next step was the partition of Bengal by Curzon which crystallized the feeling and provided it with a territorial basis. The partition agitation gave form to the indefinite ferment in the Muslim mind and resulted in the demand for separate communal electorates. Minto and Morley by their hypocrisy and double talk—saying one thing and doing just the opposite, set the guidelines for British imperialist strategy. The Act of 1909 put the seal of official recognition on the communal sentiments.

Montagu and Chelmsford, while denouncing separate representation on the basis of religion, confirmed and built in the principle in the Act of 1919, thus ammering another nail in the coffin of national unity.

Ten years later the Statutory Commission had the opportunity of reconsidering the question. In the Report they delivered themselves of the opinion:

"Communal representation—the provision by law that a particular religious community shall be represented in a popular legislature

[53] *Ibid.*

solely by members of its own body, with a guarantee as to how many communal seats there shall be—is an undoubted obstacle in the way of the growth of a sense of common citizenship. It is open to all the objections formulated in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. ... Communal electorates... perpetuate class distinctions and stereotype existing relations; and they constitute a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle. If it is a prejudice to hold these views, we admit that we share them."[54]

Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald argued : "If every constituency is to be earmarked to a community or interest there will be no room left for the growth of what we consider to be purely political organisations which could comprehend all communities, all creeds, all classes and all conditions of faith. ... If India is going to develop a robust political life, there must be room for national political parties based upon conceptions of India's interest and not upon conceptions regarding the well-being of any field that is smaller or less comprehensive than the whole of India." He asked, "If the Legislature is to be composed of these watertight compartments, how are you going to appoint your executive ?"[55]

If any one drew from these statements the conclusion that the enunciation of these lucid principles would find logical confirmation in the decisions following from them, he would be astonished to find that what happened was just the contrary of what logic indicated.

The Simon Commission recommended the continuance of separate communal electorates for all the legislatures, with weightage to the Muslim minorities in the Hindu majority provinces.

Muhammad Ali had exclaimed, "Make no mistake about the quarrels between Hindu and Musalman, they are founded only on the fear of domination. ... We are not nationalists but internationalists."[56] He would acquiesce in majority rule provided the Muslim majority representation in the Panjab and Bengal, the provincial status of NWF Province and Baluchistan and the separation of Sind were guaranteed. He argued that they would make a counterweight against the Hindu provinces. He remarked, "Luckily, there are Musalman majorities in certain provinces."[57]

The internationalisation of the internal communal relations could only mean perpetuation of communal tensions, as international relations are based on mutual distrust and national self-interest.

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[54] *The Indian Statutory Commission Report*, Vol. II p. 56.

[55] Ramsay MacDonald's speech in the House of Commons, January 26, 1931. *H. C. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 243, cols. 647-48.

[56] Indian Round Table Conference, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

II. The Second Session

Gandhiji at the Conference

Gandhiji who had failed in his efforts to conciliate the Muslims was extremely unhappy over the manner in which the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was handled by Willingdon and his officials. His interview with the Governor of Bombay and letters to the Viceroy produced no effect. On August 8 he made a statement on his visit to London: "The settlement commits the Congress to participate in the RTC to place the Congress point of view before it. But without the necessary atmosphere, my going there will be futile."[58]

On August 11, he sent a telegram to the Viceroy explaining the situation. "When I read Bombay Government's letter together with Sir Malcolm Hailey's telegram received in answer to my inquiry and reports of continuing harassment in the United Provinces, the Frontier Province and other provinces, they seem to me a complete indication that I must not sail."[59]

Willingdon replied that these misgivings were groundless, and charged the Congress with contravening the letter and spirit of the settlement. Gandhiji then asked for an interview which took place on August 25 at Simla. The talk was followed by a communique—called the Second Settlement, which confirmed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. It conceded in principle the holding of inquiries into complaints, the right of defence and direct action on the part of the Congress if the enquiry failed to give relief.

Then a further difficulty arose. The Viceroy agreed on the suggestion of Gandhiji to nominate Malaviya and Sarojini Naidu but refused to include Ansari on the ground that his name was objected to by the Muslims, in fact, by Fazli Husain, the member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. With forebodings of a stalemate in his mind, but in obedience to the urge of duty, he at last embarked upon his voyage to England by *S. S. Rajputana* on the 29th August.

His presentiment proved correct. The Second Round Table Conference with a larger membership (31 new delegates) met under the auspices of a new Government which was in the throes of a severe economic crisis. The Labour Government had fallen. The Labour Secretary of State, Wedgwood Benn, who had fought valiantly for a radical policy promising responsible government to India and refusing to sacrifice the rights of the majority in order to appease the minorities, had resigned. Although Ramsay MacDonald remained Prime Minister, he had to toe the line of his Conservative supporters—Baldwin, the Deputy Chief and Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India.

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[58] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 131.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

The main business before the Conference—the key problem in the words of MacDonald, was the solution of the Hindu-Muslim differences. The Minorities Sub-Committee met under the chairmanship of MacDonald. But he was only an interested spectator. Gandhiji earnestly appealed to the parties to abandon their fears and suspicions and to unite in a common endeavour to establish India's independence without further delay. The Muslim members of the Committee were staunch communalists and were pulled in the opposite direction by the conflict of ideas. They reflected, for instance-: Was their destiny within or without India, in autonomous provinces as units of the Indian Federation or in an independent Muslim State ? Would guarantees provided in the constitution suffice or were more tangible safeguards necessary ? The consciousness of Indian nationality receded from the Muslim mind and their politics became increasingly characterised by the concepts of power politics and balance of power.

Forcible expression was given to this attitude when the Muslims and Europeans combined to persuade the other minorities—the Scheduled Castes, the non-Brahmins, the Anglo-Indians, and the Christians, to join in impressing upon the Prime Minister that no constitution would be acceptable to them which did not safeguard their interests.

But the new idea was still in the chrysalis stage, and the old ideal of a united India had not yet completely vanished. Therefore at one stage, after much hesitation, the minorities did come to the brink of a solution. According to MacDonald, the dividing factor was the question of purely one vote. But then the negotiators wavered and the hurdle was never crossed. The Congress idealists failed till very late to admit the reality of the fears of which the Muslims complained and the Muslims were so obsessed by their immediate apprehensions that they refused to look beyond the present and foresee the vast tragedy which like a dark cloud hung over the country.

British Government Wrecks Conference

Simon, the subtle Liberal, and MacDonald, the slippery Labourite, urged India on to the suicidal course. Neither believed in Indian nationalism—neither admitted its existence in the present nor its possibility in the near future. Nor did they consider it the duty of India's rulers to promote accord between Indian communities. On the contrary most British politicians regarded the Indian National Congress as an enemy of the British Empire and wanted to see its claims repudiated by groups of Indians hostile to the Congress. Under such circumstances, the Minorities Sub-Committee gave up the job in despair. With its failure the Conference flopped, and Gandhiji pronounced in sorrow and humiliation the funeral oration at the premature burial

of the elusive fairy of Indian freedom. He told the luckless audience, "It is not given to us always to expect meticulous regard for each other's opinions and always to be accommodating so that there is no principle left with you. On the contrary, the dignity of human nature requires that we must face the storms of life. Sometimes even blood brothers have to go each his own way, but if at the end of their differences, they can say that they bore no malice and that even so they acted as becomes a gentleman, a soldier,... I will say that we parted also well."[60]

In his speech the Prime Minister announced, "His Majesty's Government would be compelled to apply a provisional scheme, for they are determined that even this disability (communal differences) shall not be permitted to be a bar to progress."[61]

Only a miracle could have saved the situation, but it did not happen. The explanation is to be found partly in the composition of the Conference. The *Daily Herald* pointed out :

"Behind the scenes of the Round Table Conference the all important private conversations are going on.

Men like Mr. Gandhi and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru are working hard for an agreement, and even stalwart orthodox Hindus are by no means obstinate. But the Muslim delegates are proving adamant. If they are regarded as really representative of Muslim opinion in India the chances of success are becoming rather slight. It is more than doubtful, however, whether they are representative. For, these Muslim delegates selected by the Government of India are almost to a man 'communalists', men who think of themselves as Muslims first and Indians afterwards."[62]

Then in August 1931, England was in the grip of a financial crisis consequent upon the world depression which could be loosened only by strict economies for which the Labour Party was not prepared. Consequently it went out of office and a Coalition Government, known as the National Government, was installed with MacDonald as Premier. The Coalition Government sought the mandate of the country and in the elections held in October, obtained a decisive victory. But of the 556 members of Parliament 471 returned were Conservatives, the Labour representatives were only 52.

The Conservative-dominated Government affected the course of affairs relating to India, both at the Round Table Conference and in India. The Conservative policy, after ousting the Labour Government in 1924, had been to reverse the policy of equality, partnership and agreement between Britain and India in framing the new constitution,

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60 *Indian Round Table Conference* (Second Session), September 7,—December 1, 1931, Proceedings, p. 422.

61 Ramsay MacDonald's Statement, December 1, 1931, *Ibid.*, p. 418.

62 *The Daily Herald* (London). September 24, 1931.

and to assert the supremacy of the British Parliament, its right to determine the pace as well as the quantum of constitutional advance.

"To the Cabinet it seemed that imperial resources—of prestige no less than of finance—were incapable of supporting a liberal policy in India."[63]

The Labour Party's ideology which impelled it to convene the Round Table Conference and to conclude the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was abandoned by the Conservatives who became the virtual government in 1931. The views of Birkenhead recovered their ascendancy. The recommendations of the Statutory Commission and not the agreements of the Round Table Conference henceforward were to guide the policy of the Government.

The Government in India headed by Willingdon made up its mind not to follow Irwinism which, according to Lord Burnham, was the quintessence of weakness, nor to permit the "half-naked seditious taqir" to darken the door of the Viceregal palace for negotiating on terms of equality. He was determined to reassert the authority of Government and to crush the presumptuous challenge of the Congress.

Regarding Gandhiji Willingdon's opinion had changed completely between the beginning and end of the second Conference. At first his view was "that he is one of the most astute political minded and bargaining little gentleman I have ever come across".[64] By the end he was writing to Hoare, "Gandhi is a set of Jekyll and Hyde, and while he may have his saintly side, on the other, he is the most Machiavellian bargaining little political humbug I have ever come across."[65]

The attitude of the National Government towards the Conference also changed. Samuel Hoare had never reconciled himself to the procedure adopted by Benn and Irwin. Nor did he favour the method of consultation and agreement with the Indian representatives which reduced the British Parliament to a court of record. His main concern was to reestablish the character of Parliament as the final arbiter of the form and content of the reformed constitution.

He expected no important results from the Conference, but was anxious to avoid the alignment of United India against Great Britain. He steered the Conference towards the Simon Commission Report. He wrote to Willingdon, "It looks to me as if the Indians themselves will be more and more forced back upon Provincial Autonomy as the first step to be taken. The proposal obviously must come from us in the first instance."[66]

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[63] Philips and Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

[64] *Templewood (Samuel Hoare) Papers*: Viceroy to the Secretary of State, August 28, 1931.

[65] *Ibid.*, January 10, 1932.

[66] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, October 2, 1931.

He even contemplated two separate acts. The first dealing with Provincial Autonomy, and the second one giving the constitution of the Central Government.

Willingdon felt that such a course would lead to a catastrophe and strongly and repeatedly warned Hoare against it. Ultimately his view was accepted and the two parts were put together in a single Act.

At the Round Table Conference the stiff and unyielding stand taken by the Muslim delegates was the result of the change of Government in England. Credibility is lent to this inference by the confidential circular issued by Benthal, the representative of the British commercial community on the Round Table Conference. He stated:

"The Muslims were a solid and enthusiastic team. Ali Imam, the Nationalist Muslim, caused no divisions. They played their cards with great skill throughout; they promised us support and they gave it in full measure. In return they asked us that we should not forget their economic plight in Bengal and we should without pampering them do what we can to find places for them in European firms so that they may have a chance to improve their material position and the general standing of their community.

On the whole there was one policy of British nation and the British community in India, and that was to make up our mind on a national policy and to stick to it. But after the general election the right wing of the Government made up its mind to break up the Conference and to fight the Congress. The Muslims who do not want responsibility at the centre were delighted."[67]

Harold Laski who throughout the sessions of the Round Table Conference assisted Sankey, in letters to Justice Holmes of USA describes his impressions of the communal discussions. On October 30, 1931 he wrote :

"Sankey made me try to bring the Mohammadans to reason, and I had their leader here for hours trying to find a basis for discussion. But it was like talking to a wall. His religion was ultimate truth and he was never even willing to find a plane of secular instructions which implied, to say, a non-theological society."

He added, "It is impossible to talk to men who believe themselves to have ultimate truth in their possession."[68]

In another letter he deplored, "Their (Mohammadans) religious fanaticism is terrible. I guess, without evidence, that Pan-Islamic hopes are a huge force in the East today and that behind them their impossible demands are vague and terrible dreams."[69]

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[67] Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 873.

[68] *Holmes-Laski Letters*—The Correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Harold J. Laski, 1916-35 (Harvard University Press, 1953), Vol. II, p. 1382, October 30, 1931.

[69] *Ibid.*, September 27, 1931.

About the attitude of the British Government's spokesmen he complained that no communal settlement was possible, "what with Tory imperialism on one side and Indian extremism on the other, I fear that it (settlement) is very unlikely."[70]

His explanation of the Tory attitude was, "The new political situation has hardened the mind of the Secretary of State" (Samuel Hoare), also, "at the back of the Secretary's mind is the complex that the white man ought not to be asked to give way to the black."[71]

In another letter he said, "I blame MacDonald in part, for if he had been strong-minded instead of weak and vain and indecisive, I think he could have compelled agreement."[72]

While he believed that Gandhi and Sankey could agree, "but the damned Tory Secretary of State gets on his hind legs and develops a prestige complex just as footling as you can imagine, throws it all back into the melting pot; and one has to begin all over again."[73]

The fact of the matter is that the National Government with MacDonald, the Labour leader as Prime Minister, and with the support of the Conservatives in Parliament had no intention to part with the substance of power. Samuel Hoare wrote in a memorandum to the Cabinet: "Few delegates would concede what history and logic suggest—that it is premature to consider federation till parties are in being in the shape of autonomous provinces, with experience and power to decide the form of the centre. To concede this would be to postpone federation for five, or, probably, ten years."[74]

Behind the Conservatives were the threat to the interests of Lancashire and the sting of the Churchill gadfly.

The only way—the well-worn way, to escape from the commitments of the First Round Table Conference, was to resort to coercion, when in doubt play the trumps. In the doubtful situation of 1931, as Moore has pointed out, this was done:

"It is known that in 1886, when Gladstone seemed to threaten the Empire by his announcement of a scheme for Irish home rule, Lord Randolph Churchill, remembering Ulster, observed that 'the orange card' would be the one to play. In 1931, when Gandhi's repudiation of the conference formula was added to the economic crisis, 'the crescent card' became a trump in the hands of the Conservative and Unionist party."[75]

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[70] *Ibid.*

[71] *Ibid.*, October 30, 1931.

[72] *Ibid.*, November 14, 1931.

[73] *Ibid.*, December 7, 1931.

[74] Philips and Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 68. Article of Moore, R. J., "The Making of India's Paper Federation, 1927-35" (quotes Hoare's memorandum for Cabinet, November 9, 1931).

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

In pursuance of this policy of fondling the Muslims and spurning the Congress, "from late 1931 until the passing of the Act nothing was done to bring together the major parties of British India. Indeed the tendency of policy was to alienate rather than reconcile the communities.

Whilst the Congress went to gaol the Muslims fared well. They obtained full provincial status for the NWFP, the separation of Sind, a virtual statutory majority of seats in the Panjab and an assured 47.6 per cent of the seats in Bengal; in short, they achieved power in four autonomous provinces. They also obtained separate electorates."[76]

Government's War on Congress

The delegates returned empty-handed to India. Gandhiji had received in England news of the deteriorating conditions at home and in his farewell speech at the Conference he warned that they had come to the parting of ways, and that their ways would take different, even opposite directions.

On landing at Bombay on the 29th of December Gandhiji found India saddled with rule by ordinance—by lawless law. The Ordinances for 1931 numbered no less than 15. For instance, the Ordinance No. VIII to try cases in the absence of the accused; the Ordinance IX to amend the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930; the Ordinance XI to confer special powers on the Government of Bengal for suppressing the terrorist movement; the Ordinance No. XII to provide against instigation to refuse the payment of certain liabilities and to confer special powers on the Government of the United Provinces for the purpose of maintaining law and order, and a number of other Ordinances for similar purpose for the North-West Frontier Province.

The Gandhi-Irwin truce was repudiated by Government action. Willingdon apprised Hoare, "The Delhi Pact at all events is dead and gone, murdered by Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar. Edward Irwin certainly made a great and gallant effort, but it has proved unsuccessful and has further proved that, as long as it lasted, it was a great handicap to Government in its administration and an enormous advantage to Congress in promoting their activities."[77]

The Congress had no faith in the British bureaucrats and their promises. The distrust had become so deep-rooted that neither Gandhiji's exhortations, nor Irwin's persuasions had much influence on Indian opinion.

The Congress leaders accused the Government for breaches of the

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[77] *Templewood (Samuel Hoare) Papers*: Willingdon to S. Hoare, December 26, 1931.

Pact and the Government officials in their turn held Congressmen responsible.

In such conditions real peace was impossible, especially as the Congress, including Gandhiji, had been greatly disappointed with the proceedings of the Round Table Conference. It was apparent to them that the optimism and enthusiasm displayed at the early stages of the First Conference had practically ebbed away. The National Government seemed to have lost interest in the Reforms as early as the middle of November, for the minds of the Government delegates were obsessed with the internal problems of England. The hasty termination of the Conference and MacDonald's discouraging and depressing speech at the close of the Second Conference were pointers.

On the side of Government the expectations raised by the attendance of Gandhiji at the Conference were dashed to the ground. While they were led to believe that he would compromise on the Congress demand, he insisted upon the immediate grant of independence in accordance with the demand of the Congress and claimed to be the delegate of the organisation which represented all India, irrespective of caste, creed, race or interest. Gandhiji, relying on the declarations of Irwin, believed the discussions between the Indian delegates and the delegates of Britain would be as between equals which implied the recognition of India as equal in status with Britain. These claims were looked upon by the Conservative Party as extravagant and untenable.

Faith in British good intentions and promises had at last touched the bottom. The chance of restoring it was lost when Gandhiji came back to India in December 1931, oppressed with premonitions of another struggle. India could no more rely upon Britain for the solution of its difficulties. Self-reliance, suffering and sacrifice constituted the hard solitary road to the goal.

During Gandhiji's absence from India not only the terms of the Pact were violated but a reign of terror was let loose. India was seething with discontent and indignation, because the Government had imposed upon the people a regime of lawless laws—the Ordinances, under which it was committing harrowing barbarities and ruthless repression. For instance, the Gujarat enquiry into the peasants' grievances had proved infructuous. Widespread distress prevailed among the peasantry in the United Provinces, but the Government insisted upon the payment of full rent. As no relief was forthcoming, the Provincial Congress Committee had obtained the permission of the Congress President for undertaking direct action. The result was that a number of leaders were imprisoned.

In the North-West Frontier Province Abdul Ghaffar Khan had raised a volunteer corps of about one lakh of Pathans, known as *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Servants of God), and affiliated it to the

Congress. The Government was alarmed at the raising of a para-military force and resolved to suppress it. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his brother Khan Sahib, and son were detained as state prisoners.

In Bengal terrorism was again raising its head and Government took recourse to extreme measures which included muzzling of the Press, detention of the suspects, and unfettered police action. One of the ugliest incidents occurred at the Hijli detention camp which resulted in two deaths and injuries to many.

The Delegation sent to India by the India League in 1932 reported as follows : (1) "The officials in India rebelled against the approach and the settlement made by Lord Irwin. They regarded it as a surrender of Government prestige and the recognition of the Congress as a rival authority"; (2) "The impression that the Government had decided on a policy of repression even before the Second Round Table Conference concluded cannot be regarded as unjustified", for apart from other evidence there was the Confidential Circular : P.C. L. 536 of 1st July 1931 issued by the Commissioner of Southern Division of the Bombay Presidency to all District Officers in the area, giving elaborate instructions to prepare for a renewal of Civil Disobedience"; (3) "As against executive authority and 'suspicion' and orders of the 'Local Government' the subject has no rights in India"; (4) "We would be justified in saying that the Ordinances have contributed to callousness and connivance of misdeeds . . . to the India of tomorrow and to the relations between Britain and India the "Ordinance mind" has been and continues to be a greater danger than any other elements in the Indian situation."

It is not surprising that Bertrand Russell was constrained to observe : "There has been no lack of interest in the misdeeds of the Nazis in Germany. . . . Few people in England realise that misdeeds quite as serious are being perpetrated by the British in India."[78]

On reaching Bombay Gandhiji immediately plunged into correspondence with the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon. The correspondence had no result, but it clarified the nature of the relation between the rulers and the ruled. While Gandhiji fondly expected to be treated with the ordinary courtesy which is shown to party leaders in free parliamentary democracies, namely, to explain to them the reasons on which Government policies and measures were based, Willingdon looked upon Gandhiji's request for reasons for repressive measures as an impertinence. He refused to admit the legitimacy of Congress inquisitiveness or the right to demand information. He asserted,

[78] Preface to *Condition of India*, by Bertrand Russell, being the Report of the Delegation sent to India by the India League in 1932.

The Delegation consisted of : (1) Maurice Wheatley, (2) Ellen Wilkinson, (3) Leonard W. Matters, and (4) V. K. Krishna Menon.

Government declined to be guided by the Congress in the pursuit of its activities. Samuel Hoare fully supported the Viceroy and assured him that no bargain could be struck with the Congress in order to obtain its cooperation.

The Secretary of State declared that the Government was at war with the Congress whose aim was the termination of British dominion over India by means of civil disobedience. He considered it the duty of Government to arm itself with all the powers necessary to crush the movement.

Willingdon who was not willing to parley with the arch rebel, in reply to Gandhiji's request for an interview in his telegram of December 29, informed Gandhiji that he was not prepared to discuss the measures which the Government of India had adopted in Bengal, the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) and the North-West Frontier Province. The request for interview was virtually turned down. Gandhiji's appeals for reconsideration of policy were disregarded. His reminder that Irwin had conceded the right of the Congress in certain situations to resort to civil disobedience was ignored.

All doors to settlement by negotiation were slammed. Self-respect now demanded an appropriate reply to the challenge. It did not wait. On January 1, 1932, the Working Committee adopted the following resolution :

"The Working Committee is of opinion that these several acts, and others of less gravity, that have taken place in some other provinces, and the telegram from His Excellency seem to make further cooperation with Government on the part of the Congress utterly impossible, unless the Government policy is radically changed. . . . In the event of a satisfactory response not forthcoming, the Working Committee calls upon the nation to resume Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes."[79]

The Government countered with an avalanche of Draconian ordinances. Five ordinances were promulgated in two days—January 2 and January 4, another five between February and July. They conferred all kinds of powers on the Government and its officers for what was euphemistically called maintenance of law and order—to prevent non-payment of taxes, to declare associations illegal, to restrict appeals from special criminal courts, to suppress terrorism, to provide special procedure for trials in certain offences, to prohibit boycotting of foreign goods, etc.

The weapon having been fashioned, its operation began on January 4, 1932. Every Congress organisation and allied or branch organisation was banned. A large number of Congressmen, whether guilty of

[79] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 866-69.

violation of any law or ordinance or not, were arrested and sentenced. The police swooped down upon the Congress leaders. Gandhiji was taken into custody and removed to prison. Vallabhbhai Patel, Congress President, was arrested at Bombay, and Rajendra Prasad in Bihar. Jawaharlal Nehru, General Secretary of the Congress, was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment, and a fine of Rs. 500 or in default 3 months more. T. A. K. Sherwani, Ansari, Rajagopalachari, Satyamurthy, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu, Abul Kalam Azad, Mufti Kifayat Ullah of Jamiat-ul-Ulama and numerous others of all ranks and belonging to all provinces were arrested and herded into jails crowded with prisoners. According to some estimates over a lakh of persons suffered punishment.

This was one part of the dual policy enunciated by Hoare, the Secretary of State, in these words, "We were determined to take every action in our power to suppress this challenge to our authority."[80]

The other part was the assembling of the emasculated Round Table Conference followed by the Joint Parliamentary Committee leading to legislation in Parliament.

Change in the Procedure

In his speech of June, Hoare announced the new procedure for dealing with the constitutional problem. According to this the Government would set out its proposals for the constitution of India in a White Paper; circulate the paper among the members of Parliament and place before Parliament one comprehensive measure for consideration during the life of the existing House of Commons.

This new procedure reduced the status of the Round Table Conference. Instead of being a body of representatives of the British Government, on the one side, and of Indian parties and interests, on the other, in order to evolve the principles of the new constitution by a process of negotiation and agreement as equals, the Indian members of the Conference were to be treated as merely advisers to the Government, while the Government remained free to accept or reject the advice.

Before the adjournment of the second session of the Round Table Conference a number of committees had been appointed to proceed to India, to conduct enquiries and make recommendations. They were—(1) The Franchise Committee under the chairmanship of Lothian, (2) The Federal Finance Committee with Eustace Percy as Chairman, (3) The Indian States Enquiry Committee presided over by Davidson.

Besides, there was the Consultative Committee consisting of the

[80] Sir S. Hoare's speech in the House of Commons, June 27, 1932. *The Indian Annual Register,* 1932, Vol. I p. 408.

Governor-General and nineteen other members to consider the reports of the other committees, and to send them to the Government in London with their comments. The Committee, however, was short-lived. For when the new procedure was announced, the Congress leaders were already behind the bars in the safe custody of the Trustees of India, and "the only active political organisation in the country"[81] was forcibly gagged.

The National Liberal Federation, however, protested and demanded, on July 27, 1932, the restoration of the Conference method as a condition of cooperation. Although Government did sometimes humour them, it looked upon their opposition somewhat disdainfully. It had come to the conclusion that nothing could be made of the Consultative Committee and hence gave no heed to the protests of the Liberals. Thereupon Sapru, Jayakar and Joshi tendered their resignations from the Committee.

Rajagopalachari, the then acting President of the Congress, commented : "The Secretary of State has now declared that not what we desire, but what a British Parliamentary Committee shall deliberate and lay down, shall be the constitution."[82]

Willingdon wrote to Hoare, "Nothing to be made out of Consultative Committee", insisted, therefore, that the Round Table Conference might be revived to consider the reports of the three Committees and the relations of the Indian States with British India, specially in their financial aspect.[83]

Communal Award

Before convening the third session of the Round Table Conference Ramsay MacDonald announced on August 10, 1932 the Communal Award which he had promised in his closing speech at the Second Conference.

The Award was based on the British theory that India was not a nation, but a congeries of racial, religious and cultural groups, castes and interests. Morley and Minto in 1909, Montagu and Chelmsford in 1919, and the Simon Commission in their report of 1930 built the structure of the Indian constitution on the foundation of this assumed multiplicity. But if their analysis of India's social system was correct it is not comprehensible why they wasted their time and energy in devising a plan of self-government and even agreeing to the goal of responsible and democratic government. From their premises the

[81] Viceroy's speech at the European Association Dinner, December 30, 1931.

[82] *The Indian Annual Register,* 1932, Vol. II, p. 33.

[83] *Templewood Papers* : Viceroy to the Secretary of State, Telegram, July 28, 1932.

only logical conclusion that could be drawn was the one which Churchill advocated.

If however the British believed that life is not all logic and perceived that the trend of social evolution in India was towards nationhood, it appears even more surprising that instead of strengthening the trend they should have adumbrated an electoral scheme which they themselves stigmatized as destructive of the growth of national unity.

Whatever that may be, whether the road was blocked deliberately or because the rulers of India were in a state of such puzzlement as to be unable to find a proper solution, no greater disservice could have been done to India's aspiration for independence than the decision of MacDonald on the communal problem. It gave Government's recognition to the following minorities: (1) Muhammadans, (2) Depressed Classes, (3) Backward Classes, (4) Indian Christians, (5) Anglo-Indians, (6) Europeans, (7) Commercial and Industrial classes, (8) Landholders, (9) Labour, (10) Universities, (11) Sikhs.

A fixed number of seats were allocated to each minority and special separate electorates were assigned to each. The scheme encouraged not only the Muslims but the other groups also to consider themselves as national units with their particular interests separate from the interests of the general body of Indians. Nothing could be a more efficacious method of fractionalising the country and preventing the growth of the consciousness of nationality.

It is not necessary to repeat the reasons for condemning the basic principle of separate communal electorates. It may, however, be noted that this vicious principle was given the widest extension possible, so as to make the working of responsible government almost impossible.

The plan obviously took for granted that the programmes and parties in India at the Centre and in the provinces, would be determined not by economic, political and social considerations but on the basis of religious and communal interests. Therefore from the foundations upwards, the entire structure—constituencies, elections, ministries—was organised on communal lines.

But great dexterity was shown in fixing the numbers of representatives. The British prejudice against the Hindus was cleverly concealed, and the bias in favour of the Muslims covered under a show of fairness. At the same time the imperial interests were safeguarded both against a possible Muslim *volte face*, as well as, the actual antagonism of the Hindus.

Take, for instance, the arrangements at the Centre. It was proposed that the total number of seats in the lower house of the Federal legislature would be 250. The Muslims were allotted 82 seats or 33 per cent, the Hindus 105, the Depressed Classes 19 and the other

groups and interests 44. The Hindu majority population was reduced to a minority (105 Hindus and 19 Depressed Classes=124 out of 250). The Muslims received the share which they were demanding. But the division of seats was so managed that no community could come into power on its own strength. Thus doors were widely opened for intrigues, defections, unscrupulous and unprincipled alliances.

In the provinces again the Muslims were given weightages where the Hindus were in a majority, *e.g.*, in Madras, the Muslims ought to have been allotted 17 seats on the population basis, actually received 29; in U.P. instead of 35 they had 66, in Bihar 40 instead of 20, in C.P. 14 for 5. In the Muslim majority provinces, on the contrary, the Muslim representation was reduced, but the Hindus were not the beneficiaries in the same ratio as the Muslims in Hindu provinces.

In the two crucial provinces—Panjab and Bengal, where the vast majority of the Muslim population of India lived, and where Muslim intransigence could raise its head powerfully, clever checks were provided. The Muslim population of the Panjab was 57 per cent of the total, they were given 49 per cent seats, that is, 84 seats out of the total of 175; the Hindus were 27 per cent in the population and were allotted 27 per cent seats, that is, 42 for the Hindus and 8 for the Scheduled Castes; the Sikhs constituted 13 per cent of population, but obtained 18 per cent or 31 seats. Thus the Muslims were prevented from exercising their legitimate share of power.

In Bengal the situation was still more curious. Muslims and Hindus were respectively 55 and 43 per cent of the population. But the Muslim share of the seats was fixed at 47.6 per cent, of the Hindus 32 per cent and of the Europeans and others—a handful compared to the others, 20.4 per cent. Muslim seats numbered 119, the Hindu seats 80 (including the 30 Scheduled Castes seats), the Europeans 11, Anglo-Indians 4, Christians 2, Commerce and Industry 19, Landholders 5, University 2, and Labour 8, and the total 250. The Bengal award was extraordinarily favourable to the Europeans for two reasons —(1) to safeguard the interests of British capital, and (2) to enable the Europeans to maintain the balance of power between the two communities.

Gandhiji Combats Communal Award

The Award created dismay in the Hindu community. Gandhiji, though in prison, realizing its mischievous character, resolved upon resisting it with all his force. He wrote a letter to the Prime Minister on August 18, and informed him that he would fast unto death if the Government did not revoke separate electorates for the Depressed Classes. In his opinion the injection of the poison of separate electo-

rates was calculated to disrupt Hindu community, without affording any advantage to the Depressed Classes.

He protested to the Prime Minister, but as his response was not satisfactory Gandhiji started his historic fast on September 20. The stunning news of the fast threw the country into consternation. Tagore at Santiniketan felt as if "a shadow is darkening today over India like a shadow cast by an eclipsed sun", and he exclaimed, "the people of a whole country is suffering from a poignant pain of anxiety, the universality of which carries in it a great dignity of consolation. Mahatmaji who through his life of dedication has made India his own in truth has commenced his vow of extreme self-sacrifice."[84]

Malaviya appealed to the leaders of the Hindus and the Depressed Classes to meet and arrive at an agreed solution to replace the Award. The leaders met, came to an agreement and cabled to the Prime Minister urging upon him to take immediate action to rescind this Award and give effect to the agreement. The Prime Minister accepted the proposed agreement and the Government of India announced the decision in the Assembly and the Council of State. Thereupon Gandhiji broke his fast on September 26.

III. The Third Session

While this poignant drama was occupying the stage in India, a farce was being enacted in London. A fresh session of the Round Table Conference was announced. But it was no longer the same old conference. The Third Conference was just a piece of window-dressing. It was not intended to be a conference of equals for the purpose of defining the principles of the constitution. Its composition was changed. Jinnah was left out. The Indian States had little interest in the proceedings and the Princes abstained. They were represented by their ministers and officers. But the British delegation was changed out of recognition. The Labour Party which disapproved of cooperation with the renegade Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald refused to join. Simon, who had been excluded from the first two sessions because of the strong objection of Wedgwood Benn, was brought in; so was Irwin and a strong Conservative contingent.

Most of the preliminary work of the Conference had been done by the Committees appointed by the Second Conference. As there was no fundamental issue before the Conference and it had to deal mostly with details—some important, there was little enthusiasm in its proceedings. The Conference sat from November 17 to December 24. The last meeting was marked by two speeches of importance. Sapru

[84] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1932, Vol. II, p. 246.

appealed to the Government to remember that the constitution they proposed to draft must be such as to be acceptable to the people of India. He said, "Unless he and his colleagues were able to convince the Congressites, the chance of making a wide appeal to the country was very limited." He added, "with all my differences with Congressmen I hold, that as far as Mr. Gandhi is concerned, he sums up in his personality the highest degree of self-respect in India and the highest degree of patriotism in the country."[85]

The second speech was that of Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State, who after recounting the achievements of the Conference replied to Sapru's appeal and assured him that he would give the fullest consideration to his demand.

Final Stage of the Act

The Round Table Conference came to a close. The Government published the White Paper on March 15, 1933, giving a complete outline of the constitution. The Paper embodied more or less the recommendations of the Simon Commission, but included in part two a scheme of the Federal Government of India at the Centre which would come into operation after certain conditions were fulfilled, *e.g.* a number of states had acceded to the Federation.

The White Paper was given a favourable reception by the three Parliamentary parties in both the Houses. But in the House of Commons Attlee read out a statement on behalf of the Labour Party recognising "the right of the people of India to full self-government and self-determination". He criticized the Paper because "it seemed directly to conflict with the principles laid down and our pledges." The Labour amendment drawing attention to the omission of the phrase Dominion Status from the Paper was voted down.

Herbert Samuel welcomed the Paper and endorsed it on behalf of the Liberal Party. But the extremists of the Conservative Party, the most redoubtable amongst whom was Winston Churchill, condemned the scheme of the White Paper in the severest terms.

On March 27, 1933, the Secretary of State moved in the House of Commons for the appointment of a Joint Committee of Peers and Commons to consider the Government's scheme of constitutional reform for India formulated in the White Paper.

He commended the proposed scheme and asked for the support of the House in establishing a strong and wise Committee to test the validity of what he had urged. He dispelled the fear of the members that the Extremists would swamp the Indian legislatures and render the constitution unworkable; he told them it was so drafted as to make

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 409.

it impossible for them to command a majority either in the Federal or provincial legislatures. The scheme had provided sufficient safeguards for the British interests as well as for the security of the minorities.

The motion was carried by an overwhelming majority.

In April a similar motion was introduced in the House of Lords and adopted unanimously.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee of both Houses was appointed in April with Lord Linlithgow as Chairman. The Indian delegation for consultation with the Joint Committee consisting of 21 members chosen from British India and 7 from the States, took part in the examination of witnesses and discussions. The Committee meetings lasted for 18 months and the report was submitted to Parliament about the end of October 1934.

On the basis of the Report a bill was prepared which was introduced on December 19, 1934. The two Houses carried it by large majorities and the Royal assent was given on August 4, 1935.

Gandhiji and Harijans

After the Poona Pact Gandhiji continued to pursue his campaign against untouchability. In February 1933 he started the weekly *Harijan* to promote the cause. But while expectedly the orthodox Hindus opposed the reform, surprisingly Ambedkar too started a propaganda against the Poona Pact. Gandhiji who was much perplexed by these developments suddenly made up his mind to go on another fast. On May 8 a twenty-one-day fast was begun in the Yeravda jail.

On the same night the Government issued a communique announcing its decision to release Gandhiji. During the fasting state he was removed from Yeravda and taken to Lady Thackersey's house in Poona. Having been restored to freedom his first thought was to create an atmosphere in the country for advancing the Harijan cause. He advised the acting President of the Congress, Aney, to suspend the civil disobedience movement and asked the Government to release the civil resisters from prison.

Willingdon declined to accept the suggestion unless the movement was unconditionally abandoned.

The temporary suspension of mass civil disobedience created an adverse reaction in the minds of some Congress leaders as had happened in February 1922 after the Chauri Chaura incident. Vithalbhai Patel and Subhas Chandra Bose issued a statement from Vienna, where they were staying for reasons of health, in these terms :

"The latest action of Mr. Gandhi in suspending Civil Disobedience is a confession of failure. . . . We are clearly of opinion that Mr. Gandhi as a political leader has failed. The time has, therefore, come

for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle with a new method, for which a new leader is essential."[86]

The criticism of such indignant leaders and the stiff attitude of the Government made it necessary that the situation should be considered afresh by Congressmen. Consequently an informal conference was held at Poona on July 12 to determine the future course of action. It was decided that Gandhiji should seek an interview with the Viceroy in order to bring about a settlement.

Gandhiji in pursuance of the decision wrote to the Viceroy asking for an interview. This was refused on the ground that the condition for granting it, *viz.*, the withdrawal of civil disobedience had not been fulfilled.

Under the circumstances peace became impossible. It was, therefore, decided to launch individual civil disobedience. Gandhiji disbanded the Sabarmati Ashram which had trained workers for his constructive programme and moved to Wardha. The Congress workers at the centre, in the provinces and districts in their thousands offered individually resistance from August 1933 to March 1934. Government pounced upon them and locked them up.

Gandhiji was again arrested on August 1, 1933, and removed to Yeravda prison. He was tried and sentenced to imprisonment for one year. This time his request for facilities to carry on the social reform work from the jail was turned down. Therefore he made up his mind to abjure all nourishment from August 16, and as his condition rapidly deteriorated the Government released him immediately on August 23, 1933.

The premature discharge greatly embarrassed him. His delicate sense of propriety could not allow him to resume his political activity till the period for which he had been paoled by a Court of Law had elapsed, that is, till August 3, 1934. So he decided to devote the interval to continue the Harijan uplift work only. He undertook an extensive tour of the country which began in November 1933 and ended in August 1934, when he returned after visiting the southern provinces, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Maharashtra, Sind, Panjab and Uttar Pradesh.

In Bihar he spent much time in succouring the victims of the terrible earthquake in the middle of January 1934 which cost thousands of lives, destroyed property worth millions of rupees, strewed thousands of acres of fertile land with sand and changed the course of many rivers.

In Orissa he visited many villages, walked on foot from village to village and covered several hundred miles.

His main purpose was to give the message of Harijan uplift and

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[86] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 942.

collect funds for work among the untouchables. During the ten months' tour he covered 12,300 miles and collected over eight lakh of rupees. His tour roused the conscience of the caste Hindu as was manifested by the vote on the admission of the untouchables to the Guruvayur temple in Kerala. Of the voters of the town 56 per cent cast their vote in favour of entry, 9 per cent against, 8 per cent remained neutral and 27 per cent abstained.

Another proof of awakening was the introduction of bills in the Central Legislative Assembly and the Madras legislature for the abolition of untouchability.

But the orthodox were not altogether tolerant. Some extremists went to the length of attempting to kill Gandhiji. Fortunately their nefarious designs did not succeed.

Revival of Swaraj Party

In the course of the tour political questions continued to intrude upon his attention. Two of them were of great importance, both were connected with the programme of the Congress. Gandhiji, on the advice of an informal conference of Congressmen, had suspended mass civil disobedience, and opted for individual civil disobedience.

Many in the Congress were, however, dissatisfied with this decision. One section held that either there should be mass resistance or no resistance at all. Another section was of the opinion that the country was not in a mood to undertake a campaign of law-breaking and therefore it was necessary to revive the old Swaraj Party, in order to fight the coming elections and enter the councils.

Gandhiji's solution was to confine civil disobedience to one individual only under the auspices of the Congress, namely himself. So far as the proposal to revive the Swaraj Party was concerned, he accorded his unreserved support, in spite of his personal view that council work was not of much importance.

On May 19, 1934, Gandhiji sponsored the resolution at the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Patna to appoint a board consisting of Ansari and Malaviya and comprising not more than 25 members chosen by the two, to run elections subject to the control of the All-India Congress Committee. The Congress Working Committee was asked to give guidance to the Parliamentary Board. It enunciated the Congress policy on the White Paper proposals and the Communal Award. It reiterated the previous opinion and condemned the Paper for falling short of the Congress goal. It repeated that the only satisfactory alternative to the White Paper was a constitution drawn up by a constituent assembly of Indian members elected on the basis of adult suffrage. So far as the Communal Award was

concerned its position was that the Congress which represented equally all the Indian communities in view of the division of opinion could neither accept nor reject it as long as the division of opinion lasted.

The Working Committee's decision concerning the Award had untoward consequences. Malaviya and Aney, members of the Parliamentary Board, resigned. They held a conference at Calcutta and founded a new party, namely, the Nationalist Party, pledged to fight the Award as well as the White Paper scheme.

From October 26 to 28, 1934, the Indian National Congress met for the first time lawfully after an interval of two years, under the presidentship of Rajendra Prasad at Bombay. The Congress confirmed the Working Committee's resolution on the Communal Award, and regretfully accepted Gandhiji's resignation from the national body.

Elections

The Congress session was hardly over when the campaign of elections started. The election was a challenge to the two cherished theories of the Government: (1) that the constitutional proposals of the White Paper were acceptable to, and the Congress demand was not supported by, the people of India on the whole; (2) that in its war upon the Congress and in the drastic measures to crush the civil resistance the Government was backed by the great mass of Indians.

The answer of the people was a total and resounding defeat of the Government on both counts. The elections demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt that the Congress enjoyed the complete confidence of the people and endorsed its repudiation of the British Parliament's claims to lay down the law for India.

The Assembly of 1935 was the last legislature announced under the Act of 1919. It consisted of 145 members, of whom 40 were nominated (officials 26, non-officials 13, Berar representative 1), and 104 elected. The elected representatives were divided into two classes—chosen by general and special electorates. The first were allocated 49 seats, and the remaining seats were divided on the basis of communities and special interests. Obviously the non-communal Congress could contest only the general seats, that is, the forty-nine. It won 44 out of them, which gave the measure of its immense popularity in the country and vindicated its stand on the British proposals of constitutional changes.

The forty-four Congressmen were ordinarily supported by the eleven members of the Nationalist Party led by Malaviya and Aney, and frequently by the twenty-two Independents who recognised Jinnah as their leader. They often inflicted defeats on the Government and thus proved that the country was with the opposition.

Jinnah on his return to India about the end of the year stood for

election to the Legislative Assembly and was elected. The Congress and the Congress Nationalists also sought election and gained success. So that in the new Assembly there were 55 Congress and Nationalists, 40 official and nominated members who supported the Government and 22 Independents (of whom 18 were Muslims) who followed Jinnah. Jinnah's party came to hold the balance between the two sides—the Nationalists and the Government. Naturally his influence and prestige soared high. He cleverly utilized his commanding position to favour one side or the other.

One result of the activities in the Assembly was that another effort was made to break the communal deadlock. This time the parties to the negotiations were Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim League and Rajendra Prasad as the President of the Congress. After nearly a month's discussions they issued on March 1, 1935 the following statement:

"We have made an earnest effort to find a solution of the communal problem, which would satisfy all the parties concerned. We regret that in spite of our best efforts we have not been able to find such a formula."[87]

Muslim Insistence on the Communal Award

The main Muslim organisations were the All-India Muslim Conference and the All-India Muslim League. Besides these, there were the Jamiat-ul-Ulama, the Ahrars, the Khilafatists and some other small groups.

The differences among the Muslim League politicians came into prominence when in 1927 Birkenhead announced the appointment of the Statutory Commission. Some League leaders became apprehensive lest the system of separate representation be abandoned in favour of joint electorates, with the result that two factions were formed which disputed the authority to convene the League session. The party led by Jinnah held the annual session at Calcutta on December 30 and 31, 1927, under the chairmanship of Muhammad Yaqub. In this session resolutions were passed advising the community to boycott the Statutory Commission, appointing a committee to prepare a constitution for India in consultation with the Indian National Congress and other political bodies, accepting joint electorates provided Muslim demands were accepted.

The other party headed by Muhammad Shafi called a meeting of the Panjab Muslim League at Lahore on December 31, with Muhammad Shafi in the chair. The meeting favoured cooperation with the Commission and reiterated the Muslim demand for separate electorates.

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[87] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1935, Vol. I, p. 295.

In December 1928, the Muslim League met in Calcutta to discuss the Nehru Committee Report. The Shafi Party also held a meeting, named All-Parties Muslim Conference, presided over by the Aga Khan, at Delhi on December 31, 1928 and January 1, 1929. The point was made that the Calcutta Conference was not really representative of the Muslims because only 49 delegates attended the meeting; on the other hand, the All-Parties Muslim Conference was fully representative, for the Muslim members of the legislatures, the Khilafatists, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama and a number of the Muslim Leaguers had joined it. A long resolution containing the demands of the Muslim community emphasizing the need of separate representation was adopted. The resolution became the basis of Jinnah's resolution on 14 points later.

As the League session at Calcutta had been adjourned, a special session was convened at Delhi at the end of March 1929. On this occasion Jinnah presented his resolution which contained the well-known 14-points covering the resolution of the Muslim Conference.

Unfortunately the session ended in uproar, and was adjourned *sine die.* A third party now came into existence whose adherents were Muslims who favoured the acceptance of the Nehru Committee scheme. This marked the emergence of three factions, the beginning of the long eclipse of the Muslim League, and the transfer of the direction of Muslim politics into the hands of Fazli Husain.

Fazli Husain who had thus far been only a provincial leader of the Panjab Muslims became a member of the Executive Council of the Governor-General at this time and assumed the reins of Muslim politics in his hands. His official position greatly helped him in playing this dominant role. Another circumstance favoured him. Jinnah had drifted from the Indian scene and proceeded to London from where he did not return to India till 1934. The fied was thus left free for Fazli Husain's operations.

But his greatest asset was the friendly attitude of the Government. In its fight against the Congress the Government depended much on the loyalty and support of the Muslim community. Irwin repeatedly urged upon the Secretary of State the need of maintaining friendly relations with the Muslims. In a letter he wrote, "In view of the extreme importance of avoiding any charges that we can of offending the opinion at this particular time, Simon should be told of great desirability of avoiding...anything that would appear discouraging to Muslim hopes either in regard to N.W.F. Province or generally."[88] He added, "the situation will worsen if during the next two or three months the Muslims were to be drawn towards the Congress."[89]

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88 *Irwin Papers*: Governor-General to the Secretary of State, May 13, 1930.

89 *Ibid.*

Ten days later he reminded Benn, "Muslims are supporting us at this moment...There should be nothing to suggest that peace will come by surrender to Hindu nationalists, which Muslims feel would mean betrayal of their interests. ...It is worth remembering that at the moment Gandhi is our enemy and the Muslims our friends."[90]

During the later stages of the First Round Table Conference Fazli Husain was disturbed at the news that some Muslims intended to agree to the joint electorates at the suggestion of Wedgwood Benn. Irwin warned the Secretary of State, "Muslim opinion is hardening, if belief that Government will not protect their interests arises a situation of utmost gravity would be created here. This belief would at once deprive us of Muslim support."[91]

By March 1931, the Muslims had publicly given expression to their apprehensions and fears. Irwin alluding to them informed Benn, "There is at the moment a considerable tussle going on between the two ideas of loyalty to their community and rapprochement with the Congress. I think at present I would back the community feeling to hold its own."[92]

The Labour Secretary of State might have required Irwin's promptings and admonitions, but so far as the Conservative Secretaries were concerned they were more catholic than the Pope. Peel, Birkenhead and Hoare were even more pro-Muslim than the Viceroy, and needed no encouragement.

This was all grist to Fazli Husain's mill.

Fazli Husain had a clear mind and held decisive views concerning Indian politics. His main principles were: 1) that the British domination over Indian affairs should diminish, 2) that the Muslim should enjoy an equal share of power with the Hindu in India, 3) that the Indian constitution should make unambiguous provision for guaranteeing this equality by giving complete autonomy to the provinces, including the power to maintain territorial forces, by creating the border Muslim majority provinces—Sind, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province, the Panjab and Bengal, as a counterweight against the Hindu provinces in order to safeguard Muslim equality, and by reducing the authority of the Central Government to the minimum.

He was a strong advocate of separate electorates and, contrary to the general opinion, regarded them as necessary for avoiding Hindu-Muslim competition and rivalry; but he was prepared to abandon them when the Muslims had advanced in education and wealth to the same position as the Hindus. He wanted, however, to form

[90] *Ibid.*, May 24, 1930.
[91] *Ibid.*, January 15, 1931.
[92] *Ibid.*, March 4, 1931.

legislative parties not on exclusively communal basis. He organised the Unionist Party in the Panjab which consisted of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim members, largely of the rural landholding class as opposed to the urban professional class. He promoted the formation of similar parties in other provinces—the landowners party in U.P. and the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal.

He set about the encompassing of his objective in right earnest. He exercised his influence in choosing the Muslim members of the Round Table Conference for both its sessions, and he pulled the strings from Delhi to prevent any wavering on the policies he approved.

He realized that the resolution of the Congress in favour of complete independence had created a new situation for the Muslims. He deprecated the political methods and ideas of Gandhiji, although he regarded him as a great awakener of the people.

With such ideas he started to organize and energize the Muslim community. He revived the All-India Muslim Conference and "made it the most powerful organ of the Muslim opinion in India". He collected funds, conducted propaganda through the press, established branches of the Conference, and consolidated the unity of the Muslims in the Panjab and Bengal.

He opposed the endeavours of Gandhiji to bring about a settlement at Bhopal and Simla in 1931 before attending the Round Table Conference, and urged the Muslim leaders not to depart from the demands of the Muslim Conference. His efforts were crowned with success when MacDonald announced his Communal Award in 1932.

But the Award was greatly resented by the Hindus and they started a campaign for its revision. Gandhiji did obtain its modification so far as the Scheduled Castes representation was concerned, but the more important question of the Muslim representation remained unsolved.

Abul Kalam Azad initiated the move to bring about an agreement among the communities which would replace the MacDonald Award. Malaviya, Syed Mahmud and Shaukat Ali took up the matter. They tried to persuade the Muslim leaders to arrive at a settlement on the basis of the acceptance of the thirteen points (out of fourteen) of Jinnah, and joint electorates in accordance with the formula of Muhammad Ali.

Shaukat Ali endeavoured to obtain the release of Gandhiji so that he might assist in bringing about the settlement, but the Viceroy refused the request, and even disallowed any interview with him in gaol. He then got into touch with the Muslim leaders of the Bombay Legislative Council and other prominent persons in the provinces and, with the support of the Khilafat Conference and the Jamiat-ul-Ulama,

decided to hold an All-Parties Muslim Conference at Lucknow on October 16, 1932. The Conference met and approved of the formula including the 13 points of Jinnah, but on the question of joint electorates, while favouring the Muhammad Ali solution, left it to the committee appointed to negotiate with the other communities with discretion in this respect.

Many Muslim leaders including the Afghan Jirga of the Frontier Province welcomed the moves of the All-Parties Muslim Conference of Lucknow. The President of the Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. Moonje, approved of the move and assured cooperation.

But the effort of the Nationalist Muslims was strongly opposed by a number of Muslim organisations. Iqbal, the President of the All-India Muslim Conference, recently reconstructed by Fazli Husain, and a number of noteworthy Muslims signed a statement which declared:

"We feel that it will be highly inopportune to reopen the question of separate versus joint electorates and we are convinced that our community is not prepared to give up this safeguard at the present juncture."[93]

The Secretary of the All-India Muslim League, the Central Muhammadan Association, the Calcutta Muslims, the Madras Presidency Muslim Conference joined in the chorus of disapproval of the Muslim nationalist proposals.

The Lucknow Conference Committee and a number of Hindu and Sikh leaders held preliminary consultations at Allahabad on November 1, 1932, and decided to call a Unity Conference of all the communities at Allahabad. In the first session of the Conference held on November 3 a committee was appointed to thrash out the proposals of a settlement.

The committee sat from November 3 to November 17 and prepared the draft of agreement. This was considered at two sessions of the Unity Conference held on 16th, 23rd and 24th December.

The agreement covered all the points of the Delhi Muslim Conference of 1929 (the 14 points of Jinnah). It embodied approval of all these points—in regard to the composition of the central and provincial legislatures, the statutory provision of Muslim majorities in the Panjab and Bengal, the inclusion of minority representatives in the Cabinets, weightage for the minorities, the separation of Sind, reforms in Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province, the assurance of fair representation in civil and military services, the protection of religion, culture and personal laws, the guarantee of fundamental rights to all citizens.

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[93] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1932, Vol. II. p. 284.

In regard to the system of elections it was agreed that all elections should take place through joint electorates, but for the next ten years the method of election would be a modified form of Muhammad Ali's formula. Unfortunately in 1932 and 1933 the Congress was banned and could not meet to settle the problem. It did flout the ban and held an illegal session at Delhi. But it could not transact any business.

The Government of Bengal too had imposed a ban on the meeting of the Congress and had made elaborate police arrangements to prevent it. Large-scale arrests of Congressmen were effected, including Malaviya, Mrs. Motilal Nehru, Aney, Syed Mahmud and nearly a thousand other delegates. In spite of the Government arrangements for prohibiting the session a number of Congressmen met on April 1, 1933, and passed resolutions. But in the prevailing conditions it was not possible to discuss the agreement of the Allahabad Unity Conference, December 1932.

It is a great pity that the organisers of the All-India Muslim Conference disapproved of the proposals of the committee of the Unity Conference, Allahabad.

Fazli Husain called a joint meeting at Delhi on November 20, 1932, which was attended by the members of the Working Committee of the All-India Muslim Conference, the Council of the Muslim League and the Jamiat-ul-Ulama (Kanpur). It passed the following resolution :

"In order to remove all possible misrepresentations or misapprehensions, this meeting wishes to make it quite clear that no communal settlement by whomsoever arrived at or agreed to, shall be acceptable to the Muslim community at large, unless and until all the demands embodied in the Moslem Conference resolution of the 1st January 1929, amplified by the resolution of April 1931, are fully conceded."[94]

The obstreperous dissent to narrow communal mindedness gave a quietus to the hope of settlement, especially because it was encouraged and bolstered by Government. Apparently the Muslim Conference and the League had little constructive contribution to make to the vital problems of India. They took no notice of the civil disobedience movement and of the reign of terror established by the Government. Having negatived the proposals of the Unity Conference they seemed to have had little else to do. Even the publication of the White Paper (March 15, 1933) did not stir them. They remained engaged in the pastime of petty internal squabbles which multiplied factions and enfeebled the organisations.

Gandhiji's fast, the Poona Pact, his release and the suspension of the mass civil disobedience movement, the cruel cat and mouse play

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

of the Government of which Gandhiji was the victim, created little interest among the members of the Muslim communal organisations. These sensational events, so far as the Muslims were concerned, might as well have taken place on some other planet for ought they cared.

Fazli Husain, an important member of the Viceregal Cabinet and a powerful crusader of Muslim interests, philosophized with Lothian about the efficacy of repressive measures to kill the Congress, but laid the blame at the doors of Gandhiji—"a bad judge of men, an opportunist, a quibbler, a shirker of responsibility, an ill-informed, unreliable dabbler in affairs beyond his comprehension or control."[95]

But when some Congress leaders broached the proposal to revive the Swaraj Party in order to fight the elections there was excitement in the Muslim circles. The All-India Muslim League woke up, and the Council of the League met on March 4, 1934. It ended the split between the League factions and elected Jinnah as the President of the united body. Jinnah who returned from England after several years' stay early in April 1934, accepted the offer. Soon after he went back to England, but finally came back about the end of the year to participate in the elections to the Legislative Assembly.

The affairs of the All-India Muslim Conference were sorted out through the intervention of the Aga_Khan, who gave an award effecting complete change among the office holders. ... The Nawab of Chhatari was appointed as the new President.

These two Muslim organisations represented the liberal and conservative wings of the community. The two differed in their attitude towards the constitution of 1935, but agreed in upholding the Communal Award.

In the Panjab and Bengal the state of affairs was somewhat different. The Muslim leadership in both these provinces favoured the Muslim Conference, in the Panjab under the guidance of Fazli Husain and in Bengal under Fazlul Haq. Fazli Husain was anxious to strengthen the Unionist Party and Fazlul Haq his Krishak Party. Neither wanted that political affairs should be conducted on exclusively communal lines.

Fazli Husain, therefore, refused to join Jinnah's Muslim League which although politically more progressive was organisationally purely communal. There was another considerable difference between the two. Fazli Husain and his allies in the other provinces largely represented the interests of the rural landholding class; on the other hand, the following of the Muslim League mainly belonged to the urban professional class. In many ways the ideology of the Muslim

[95] Azim Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

League was similar to that of the Congress, but because of their non-communal party politics the attitude of the Unionists, the Zamindars Party and the Krishak Party came nearer to that of the Congress on the communal question. Fazli Husain, however, was opposed to both the Congress and the Muslim League.

March of Freedom

The period 1924-35 marked a great advance towards the goal of independence. In 1924, when the Legislative Assembly demanded the appointment of a round table conference to revise the constitution of 1919, the Government summarily rejected the resolution and appointed a departmental committee to look into the working of the Act to rectify any defects that might have been revealed in its working during the last three years.

In 1935, the Government had been forced to admit the need of conceding Dominion Status with safeguards. But it was not a willing admission and the ruling party in office was very reluctant to adopt the method of consultation with the Indian subjects on equal terms in place of imposing their will on them. Nevertheless, it was not possible to revert to the position before 1930. But even in 1936, the goal seemed far away and the journey long.

For the people of India the period was filled with unusual stir and excitement. Events which featured in the titanic struggle were full of passion and drama. The movement surged forward and receded back, and although it did not immediately achieve the goal, it transformed India. It started with a solemn march led by Gandhiji to the seashore, then it spread speedily like a forest fire all over the land. The symbolic inoffensive breach of a minor regulation soon broadened into an aggressive movement of civil disobedience on a magnified scale, with refusal to pay land revenue as one of its planks.

The Government regarded it as a war which aimed at the termination of British rule in India. The nationalist press noticed its incidents as war news. Hoare and Willingdon, Conservative and Liberal, resolved to crush the enemy—the Congress, and mobilised the forces of Government to achieve their purpose. They repudiated the policy adopted by Benn and Irwin and refused to admit the right of the Congress to interfere with the work of Government or to question the propriety of its measures.

Considered from the short-term point of view, the victory in war had been won apparently by the Government. The aggressive civil disobedience movement was crushed. Gandhiji was obliged to suspend the mass activity although he did not abandon the right of the people to resort to breaking of laws enforced by an alien government

with harsh and oppressive sanctions. But for the time being he limited this right to his own person.

But the movement had made it clear that a temporary halt in activity could not be interpreted as a sign of permanent peace. The will to resist had not been eradicated.

At the same time the growth of the terrorist movement, the spread of communism, the restlessness among the labour class breaking out in frequent strikes, the economic distress of these years, and disillusionment among young sections of the intelligentsia portended dangerous developments.

The policy of Government had challenged the self-respect of the people. It evoked a reaction which brought about a permanent change in the character and outlook of India. The whirlwind movement roused the masses to obey willingly their chosen leaders rather than unwillingly the foreign rulers, thus justifying their demand for self-government.

Qualities of fearlessness, self-reliance, sacrifice were evoked, providing the virtues which lie at the foundation of freedom. The age-long dependence on others for the removal of ills from which the country suffered was realized as a delusion. Faith in British promises and goodwill was completely shattered and independence was eagerly sought by all sections of the people.

The struggle had a marvellous effect upon social conditions. The consciousness of equality of all, irrespective of caste, was born, and hence untouchability—an abominable institution with widespread roots and ramifications which had plagued India for thousands of years, was discarded in principle though not yet uprooted in practice.

But the most astonishing effect of the upheaval was the sudden uprise of Indian women. Their part in the movement was splendid as the following table shows:

Convictions under ordinary law and acts which replaced the Ordinance X of 1932.[96]

	Convictions up to February 1933	February 1933	Total
MEN	65,699	2,292	67,991
WOMEN	3,333	129	3,462

The Government was so nonplussed by this unforeseen development that the proposal was seriously considered to employ Depressed Class women to deal with women civil resisters. It was believed that the Depressed Classes were loyal to Government and should be willing to serve as tools of repression.

[96] Government of India, Home Department, Political File No. 3/11 of 1933.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NEW CONSTITUTION IN OPERATION

I. Nature and Characteristics of the New Constitution

The process of framing the new constitution of India took eight long years. The first step was taken in November 1927 when the Statutory Commission was appointed and the last when the Royal assent was given on August 4, 1935. The dilatory tactics were adopted deliberately. Birkenhead who took the initial steps was sceptical about reform and believed the Act of 1919 had given away too much because of the general malaise which succeeded the War. He wanted to prevent the appointment of the statutory committee and the conduct of enquiry by the Labour Party and to keep India on the tenterhooks of expectations, hoping that the clamour for reform would subside in time. He confessed, "Mere antedating the setting up of the Commission means nothing. We can play with time as we want."[1] During this period the Government in England changed several times. The process was initiated under the Conservative Government with Baldwin as Prime Minister and Birkenhead as Secretary of State, it was continued under the Labour Government—Ramsay MacDonald and Wedgwood Benn, then completed under the National Government headed by Ramsay MacDonald, supported by Baldwin and Samuel Hoare.

The change in Government inevitably affected the course of deliberations, as also the aim and method of processing the formulation of the constitution. In India, too, the period was one of strain and storm. The contradictions in the economic life of the country were becoming acuter. The profits of mill-owners and the dividends of shareholders were shooting up with fantastic speed as a result of the post-war boom. For example, the jute industry gave a dividend on the capital of 90 per cent per annum from 1915 to 1924, and in a leading mill of 100 per cent in 1927, 60 per cent in 1928, and 50 per cent in 1929. The cotton industry gave dividends from 40 to 100 per cent; in the Empress Mill of Nagpur : 80.86 per cent per annum in 1925-26, and of 28, 26 and 24 per cent in 1928, 1929 and 1930. In the year 1929, some coal companies were paying from 30 to 40 per cent dividend. In 1928, ten companies gave dividends averaging 23 per cent in 1928 and 20 per cent in 1929. Such profits continued till the outbreak of the Second World War.

In contrast the condition of the wage earners was miserable. A

[1] *Irwin Papers* : Birkenhead to Irwin, September 23, 1926.

labour leader declared, "Nothing can equal, for squalor and filth and stench, the *bustees* (workers' quarters) in Howrah and the suburbs of Calcutta."[2] Another pointed out, "The housing conditions in the city of Bombay, the most industrialized centre in India, are a disgrace to any civilized community."[3]

The wages of labourers were miserably low. They were inadequate even to provide the elementary necessities of life. In Bombay in 1935, the textile workers earned anywhere beween Rs. 4-8 and Rs. 48 per month. The earnings of workers in unorganized industries were worse. It is true that wages increased after the First World War which awakened labour sufficiently to prevent reduction. Nevertheless, compared with the enhancement of profits the rates of wages were extremely low.

The effect of the enormous disparity became manifest in the labour strikes. The labour movement continued to advance rapidly providing much stimulus to the political movement of the times, and to the development of political consciousness among the masses. From 1924 the communist ideas also began to percolate into the labour movement. The Communist Party of India was constituted for the first time in 1926. The workers and peasants parties came also into existence in Bengal (1926), Bombay, United Provinces and Panjab. They joined together into an all-India body in 1928. Trade unionism also made rapid strides.

These organisations of labour played a considerable part in the demonstrations against and boycott of the Simon Commission. Irwin declared, "The disquieting spread of the methods of communism has for some time been causing my Government anxiety."[4]

The Government countered the movement by such measures as the Public Safety Bill which was defeated in the Assembly in 1928, but issued as an Ordinance by the Viceroy, the Whitley Commission on labour and the Trades Disputes Act. In March 1929, the Government sought to crush the movement by arresting 32 leaders and thus to deprive the Labour Unions of their principal guides.

The internal contradictions in the agrarian sector also contributed powerfully to the social malaise. There was perpetual conflict between the Government plagued with the problem of meeting increasing expenditure with inelastic sources of income, and hence obliged to squeeze the substance out of the primary industry of agriculture. Its victim was the primary producer, who was pressed by the upper and

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[2] Shiva Rao, B., *The Industrial Worker in India*, pp. 113-14 (quoted by Palme Dutt, *India Today*, p. 374).

[3] Parulekar S. V., Speech at the International Labour Conference, Geneva, July 1938 (quoted *ibid.*, p. 363).

[4] Legislative Assembly, January 28, 1929. *Legislative Assembly Debates* (January 28 to February 23, 1929), Vol. I, p. 5.

nether stones of the mill—the revenue collector or Government agent, and the landlord and the moneylender.

Decades of this unequal struggle had divided agrarian society into the few well-to-do big farmers and landlords and the vast army of cultivators and labourers, who were every year augmenting the crowd of landless, misery-stricken, half-starved, half-employed, daily-wage earners. The fall in the prices of primary commodities greatly worsened their hopeless condition. The result appeared in the form of peasant movements in the Panjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh. They added to the strength of the Gandhian struggle and at the same time constituted a threat to the spirit which inspired the Gandhian movement.

Then there was the socio-religious conflict known as the communal clash. After the virtual disintegration of the Khilafat movement and the non-cooperation struggle in 1924 the country became involved in internecine quarrels. The Hindu-Muslim riots were one aspect of the strains in society. They were an indication of the distrust which inevitably followed the failure of the joint endeavours to achieve their common aims.

The consequences were far-reaching. The Congress became divided between no-changers and pro-changers or Swarajists. It lost the will to pursue direct action, and Gandhiji withdrew from the political arena to carry on social uplift work and economic organisation. Later the Swarajists split into two factions—the Swarajists, who were against the acceptance of office, and the Responsivists who were in favour of cooperating with the Government and holding ministerial and other appointments.

The politically oriented Muslims consisted of traditionalists and modernists. During the Khilafat movement the first group threw itself into the agitation in full strength. The Ulama were the life and soul of the Khilafat agitation and were strong supporters of the non-cooperation movement. But many modern educated men had also accepted the lead of the Ulama. The Muslim League which was the organ of the English-educated middle and the propertied upper classes was left out in the cold during the agitation.

But in 1924, the Khilafat leaders lost the leadership of the community and the Muslim League sprang into life again under the fostering care of Jinnah. At the same time other groups were formed, *e.g.*, the All-India Muslim Conference, the Ahrars, the Khaksars, the Khudai Khidmatgars. The Jamiatul Ulama formed in 1919, though mauled in the Khilafat fight, continued to show signs of vitality. Some Ulama, however, lost their trust in the Indian National Congress and started to propagate ideas of separation and isolation, drawn together by dreams of Pan-Islamic unity and Islamic revival.

Hindu communalism received impetus from these developments.

The Hindu Mahasabha gathered strength, attracted a number of Congress leaders and started the movement of reclamation—reconversion and solidarity. The Muslim and the Hindu communalisms competed with each other and succeeded in spreading the poison of hatred and fear throughout the length and breadth of the country. They found vent in frequent bloody clashes, arson, loot and violence.

The mainspring of the Indian economic and social tensions was the policy of the British rulers—both in its positive and negative aspects. It is not surprising that the political struggle should draw its force largely from these tensions or that its form and substance should be moulded by them, and its character determined by them.

The growing contradictions in national life and the increasing suffering of large sections of the people shaped the attitude and informed the temper of the national leaders. Their demand for self-government was based on considerations of national honour, but its urgency was due to the conviction that the solution of the economic and social problems had proved beyond the will and capacity of the alien rulers, who had evaded, even inhibited, the measures necessary for economic development and aided the forces of conservatism and social disharmony.

While the rulers in denying self-government to India took their stand on the inner conflicts and diversities of the Indian people, the Indian Nationalists justified their demand for independence on the obvious failure of the rulers to provide remedies for their removal. In the circumstances, the unavoidable tug of war between the two was bound to ensue.

The struggle, however, was extraordinary, for it had no parallel in history. The one side resorted mainly to aggressive but non-violent resistance in order to loosen the hold of Government, the other responded by following the strategy of attack which combined concession with coercion.

The Government of India Act of 1935 was but an incident in this continuing struggle, preparations for which were made with elaborate and prolonged deliberation. Considerable statecraft was employed in drafting the constitution to satisfy the differing aims and objects of the parties concerned--British and Indian. The British object was determined by the conflict between two forces. Since 1919 the Indian political parties had been urging the paramount need of transference of power into Indian hands. As a result, it was felt among the ruling classes that the flood of demand could not be kept behind the wall of the negative perpetually. But the imperialist interests—economic and political, counselled otherwise. For any weakening of British authority would open the floodgates and submerge the Empire.

Political skill and diplomatic dexterity were required to find a

solution for the two conflicting aims, so that while the substance of power was retained by the British, the appearance only was given away.

The constitution-makers had two alternatives before them—(1) either to choose the course which secured the long-term interests of both India and England regardless of the illegitimate claims of the various parties and interests, or (2) to adopt the immediately less troublesome course which satisfied the short-term needs of the British investors and manufacturers. The first course implicated radical change in British policy—the abandonment of the exploitation of the people of the country, and extending cooperation with the Congress.

The easier course was to dismiss the demands of the majority as extravagant, in other words, to sacrifice the permanent good of the whole people in order to safeguard the immediate interests of the minority groups. The choice meant befriending the minorities, accentuating their differences with the majority, inciting their distrust and fears of the majority, and thus attaching them to the coat-tails of the rulers.

The second course was selected in the fond belief that the opposition it would provoke from the majority represented by the Congress could not last long, and in any case could be overcome by the overwhelming physical force of Government and the moral support of the minorities. The belief rested on the narrow and short-sighted conception of imperialist policy; firstly, the necessity of preserving the political interests of imperialism, and secondly the importance of India as an instrument in the preservation of the far-flung British Empire. It did not take, however, even more than a decade after the promulgation of the constitution for the relentless march of history to prove the hollowness of these assumptions of the then imperialist statesmen.

In drafting the constitution two preliminary problems had to be faced. The first was whether the constitution should consist of two separate acts, separately passed by Parliament, one containing the immediately enforceable part, namely, that relating to the provinces, and the other to come into operation after certain conditions were fulfilled, that is, after the Central Government was established; or to enact a single constitution containing both parts.

The Secretary of State was inclined to prefer two separate acts, but the Viceroy, considering the adverse effect of splitting the constitution on Indian opinion, laid stress upon the second alternative, which was eventually adopted.

The second and the more vital question concerned the character of the Central Government. The Simon Commission had suggested a federal structure but rejected the idea of responsibility at the centre. Although Indians of all shades of opinion were united in demanding

responsible government at the centre, British opinion was not in favour of the popular control of central authority. By a clever device while dyarchical arrangement was to be introduced in the structure of the Federal Union, its operation was made conditional on the accession of a number of states, thus the Federation could come into existence only if the Princes willed it.

The Government of India Act, 1935, provided two alternate constitutions for the Central Government. One contemplated the establishment of a Federal Union consisting of the whole of India—the British Indian provinces, and the Indian states. Alternatively, if this condition was not fulfilled, then the constitution of the Government of India Act, 1919, with some minor amendments would remain in force. The first alternative of the Act of 1935 never came into force as the requisite number of states did not accede. It is not, therefore, necessary to explain the scheme in detail, except in order to show the British attitude on the question of conceding responsible government at the centre. The whole scheme was so devised as to make it almost impossible for the progressive and liberal elements in the Indian society to obtain power and carry out necessary reforms. For instance, the Federal legislature was to be bicameral. The upper chamber was to consist of 260 representatives, of whom 104 or two-fifths were to be chosen by the rulers of the states. The remaining 156 were distributed as follows :

140 seats were allotted to the provinces, of which 75 were for the general electorate, 6 for the Scheduled Castes, 4 for Sikhs, 49 for Muslims and 6 for women. 10 seats were reserved—Anglo-Indians 1, Europeans 7 and Indian Christians 2. 6 seats were kept at the disposal of the Governor-General for nomination of members of his choice.

Thus in a house of 260, the majority of the population, *viz.*, the Hindus (including the Depressed Classes) could elect only about 31 per cent members, whereas 24 per cent of seats were distributed among the communal minorities, 40 per cent were given to the states, and about 5 per cent to nominated persons and women (elected by the legislature).

The authors of the constitution intended the states to play a peculiarly significant role : they were expected to act as a stabilizing factor, which was a euphemism for setting up roadblocks on the path of social change and political progress. The states which were inhabited by 24 per cent of the total population of India were allotted 40 per cent seats, and if their contribution to the revenue of the Federation was taken into consideration it would appear that the part of India bearing one-tenth of the burden of the state was to enjoy four-tenth of the share of power.

The lower house—the Federal Assembly, was to comprise 375

members, of which 125 were to be drawn from the states—that is, 24 per cent of the population acquired 33 1/3 per cent of representation.

The 250 seats which were allotted to the provinces were distributed as follows : Hindus (including the Scheduled Castes) 105 or 42 per cent seats, which reduced the representation of the majority of inhabitants to a minority; the Muslims 82 seats, that is, 24 per cent of population obtained nearly 33 per cent of seats; the other minorities, 26 seats, industry and commerce 11 seats, labour 10, landholders 7, and women 9.

Moreover, most of the members were to be elected in the British provinces to the Federal Assembly by the members of their own communities who were members of the provincial assemblies according to the system of proportional representation with single transferable vote.

The executive authority of the Federation was vested in the Governor-General on behalf of the Crown. To aid and advise the Governor-General in the exercise of his functions a council of ministers not exceeding ten was provided. The ministers were to be appointed by the Governor-General to hold office during his pleasure. They were to be members of the legislature, but not responsible to the legislature, though the Instrument of Instructions required them to command a majority in the legislature.

The Governor-General exercised certain powers in his discretion and certain others in his individual judgment, and above all he exercised the general overriding power over the government.

The powers of the legislature were limited both in matters of finance as well as in matters reserved to the authority of the Governor-General—defence, external affairs, ecclesiastical affairs and excluded areas. The civil services including the police were to be appointed by the Secretary of State and their rights and conditions of service were protected by special laws.

The law-making authority of the legislature was also limited. It could not legislate on matters relating to defence, the rights of the civil services, the states, and the minorities, or pass measures affecting British economic interests. Above all, the Governor-General could exercise a veto on any bill passed by the legislature either by withholding assent, or by reserving it for further consideration or disallowing it. He had also the power to pass Governor-General's Acts and issue ordinances having the force of law for six months.

The powers of the Governor-General were very extensive as numerous matters were subject to his discretionary authority, where he was independent of the advice of the ministers or the opinion of the legislature. Then he had special responsibilities which he discharged

according to his own judgment. Those were in addition to the four subjects wholly reserved for his administration.

All this reduced transfer of responsibility to the Federal Union at the centre to the minimal. It constituted an almost complete estoppel on the power of the central ministers to undertake measures necessary for the economic or social welfare of the people, or the solution of the urgent problems of the country. But India as the bastion of the Empire remained secure.

So far as the provincial part of the constitution was concerned there was some advance upon the previous constitution in the Act of 1935. In view of the acceptance of the principle of federation, the provinces were not treated as subordinate administrations on whom certain powers were devolved, but as autonomous units of the federation. But although this implied some independence from the control of the Government of India and the Secretary of State, the sphere of provincial authority remained as limited as before. The main change was that the division into reserved and transferred subjects was abolished. Dyarchy was ended and responsibility for practically the whole field of provincial government was transferred.

Another advance was the extension of the franchise from 2.8 to 11 per cent of population by lowering the property qualifications. The composition of the Legislative Assemblies and the Legislative Councils continued in accordance with the old principles. The vicious system of separate communal representation remained and was expanded. The minorities were given weightage in representation in the provinces where they were in a minority, except that the Hindu minorities in the Panjab and Bengal were not treated equally favourably with the Muslims. The Muslims who were in a majority in the Panjab and Bengal were allocated a little more and a little less than 50 per cent seats in their respective legislatures, while weightage was given to the Sikhs and Europeans. In a number of cases bicameral legislatures were instituted.

About the Centre it would not be inappropriate to say that the mighty Parliamentary mountain heaved and delivered a mouse which however was still-born. It ought to be admitted that responsible government remained as distant a goal as ever, while Dominion Status vanished in thin air.

Samuel Hoare justified this decision and wrote : "The Statute of Westminster has completely changed the position from what it was when Halifax made his speech. . . .Can anyone here now say that the functions in India will at any time in the future be exactly the functions that are claimed under the Statute of Westminster ?"[5] He

5. *Templewood (Samuel Hoare) Collection* : Letters from the Secretary of State, Vol. IV, Samuel Hoare to Willingdon, January 10, 1935.

informed the Viceroy that the Indian Committee members took the view that it was impossible to have a preamble with any mention of Dominion Status, and not only the Conservatives, but many Liberals and even some of the Labour people were against the mention of the phrase Dominion Status. He said, "It may interest you to know that Austen Chamberlain and Eustace Percy . . . told me that if there had been a preamble on the lines demanded by most Indians the Bill would never pass and that they and their friends would find themselves in opposition."[6]

Willingdon had pleaded that a new preamble to the Act should be prepared promising Dominion Status as the goal of Indian policy. But he was overruled and the British Government refused to say anything of the kind in a new preamble, but preserved the old one of the Act of 1919 in the 10th schedule which dealt with repealed enactments. A. B. Keith commented, "The preservation of the smile of the Cheshire cat, after its disappearance was adduced by the critics, as the best parallel to this legislative monstrosity."[7]

The scheme of federation was embodied in the Act, but even before its enactment there were grave doubts about its feasibility. The Princes had welcomed the scheme at the First Round Table Conference because they wanted to achieve two objects. In the first place they were anxious to fortify their internal autonomy against the vague and unbounded authority of the paramount power and the arbitrary intervention of the Viceroy—the agent of the paramount power in their home affairs, and secondly to obtain influence in the administration of all-India affairs.

But soon after the Conference doubts began to assail them regarding the real implications of federation. The Princes who met at Bombay in February 1935 demanded the clarification of their relations with the paramount power before making up their mind about joining the Federation. The Chamber of Princes passed a resolution at Delhi on January 22, 1935, which emphasised that the inauguration of the Federation depended upon the clear recognition of the sovereignty of the states and their rights under treaties and engagements. Hoare was upset and he was surprised both at the views of the ministers of the states as well as the resolution passed by the Princes. He wrote, "Our enemies were delighted and our friends gravely perturbed. Even my colleagues in the Cabinet were asking whether it was worth going on with the Bill at all."[8] He complained, "We were getting little or

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[6] *Ibid.*, January 24, 1935.

[7] Keith, A. B., *A Constitutional History of India 1600-1935* (1961 reprint), p. 316.

[8] *Templewood (Samuel Hoare) Collection* : Letters of the Secretary of State, Vol. IV, Letter to Willingdon, March 1, 1935.

no help from your end and that whilst the diehards were kept fully informed as to what was happening and were daily using great influence with their friends amongst the Princes, we appear to be inert and helpless."[9]

According to Hoare, Winston Churchill and Courtauld were bringing pressure upon Patiala and Dholpur, and Rothermere and others were spending large sums of money in dissuading the Princes from coming in. Willingdon was told that Rushbrooke Williams, "sometimes editor of the annual publication of the Government, "India", and then an adviser to the Princes was going round telling them that the Government was not keen on Federation.

Then the changed attitude of the socialist-oriented Congressmen also alarmed them. Till the passing of the Act of 1935, the Congress under the advice of Gandhiji, had refrained from intervening in the internal affairs of the states and left the question of constitutional change to the state people to solve. But the withdrawal of Gandhiji from politics in 1934 removed the restraining influence, and the Congress under Jawaharlal's presidentship started to take active interest in the state people's movement. The result was that while the Government remained lukewarm, almost hoping that the Princes would refuse to join the Federation, the Princes had second thoughts as they examined closely the implications of the Federal Union and marked the change in the views of the party which was likely to come into power. The demand of the Congress that the states should establish responsible governments and allow their subjects the right to elect state representatives to the federal legislature upset them.

The wavering of the Princes, the outspoken denunciation of the Congress, the hostility of the reactionary Tories, the opposition of Manchester created doubts in the mind of the Government whether they should proceed with the Bill in Parliament; but having gone so far, they reluctantly resolved to push it through, ultimately hoping that Willingdon's forecast would come true. He had told Hoare, "I have generally found that when the Indian knows that we have made up our mind to do a particular thing, after squealing for a few weeks as he has done in this matter, he generally sits down and accepts the situation."[10]

Apparently not out of faith in responsible government but in order to avert impending apprehension of disaster—the fear that India would break away from the British Empire if no constitutional advance was made, that the principal parties in Parliament voted for the Bill in an overwhelming majority. Baldwin recommended the reformed constitution in these words :

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[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*, Willingdon to Samuel Hoare, January 13, 1935.

"It is my considered judgment in all the changes and chances of this wide world today that you have a good chance of keeping the whole of that sub-continent of India in the Empire for ever."[11]

Meanwhile, warning voices had been raised from two directions—the extreme Tories and the radical socialists, in criticism of the whole constitutional edifice. The spokesmen of the first were Churchill in the House of Commons and Lloyd in the Lords. They agreed that India was unfit for self-government and any advance in that direction because of the clamour of an insignificant section of the educated Indians was a step towards catastrophe—abdication, dissolution and chaos.

On the other side, Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party in Parliament, argued that "no legislation for the better government of India will be satisfactory which does not secure the goodwill and co-operation of the Indian people by recognising explicitly India's right to Dominion Status and by providing within it the means of its attainment."[12]

Attlee not only regretted the omission of the phrase Dominion Status from the Bill, but pointed out that contrary to the optimism of the Secretary of State regarding its reception in India, he found that the Bill had been rejected by all the live movements in India. He thought the Bill suffered from many defects. In the first place, the constitution it provided was rigid, incapable of flexibility and growth; secondly, it did not recognise the rights of Indians "because if you read the Bill what strikes you mainly is the large number of reservations. The keynote of the Bill is mistrust. There is no trust at all. India is not to have control of her foreign affairs and of her finances. Indians in the Provinces are not fit to deal with terrorism. The whole note struck by the Bill throughout is not that here we start a constitution which is going to be worked by Indians, but some kind of consultation with restrictions of every kind all the time. In fact, one thing which seems to be left out of the Bill is the Indian people."[13]

He compared the Bill to a piece of machinery. It was like a ship, but the source of energy which could give it movement was left out. "It is Robinson Crusoe's ship. The bill is designed by Robinson Crusoe and at every point the Indians are very little better than Man Friday. There is inequality of status running right through the Bill."

In conclusion he warned, "It is quite impossible to get the real

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[11] Baldwin, O. R., *My Father : The True Story* (1955), pp. 175-76. Quoted by Aziz, K. K., *Britain and Muslim India*, p. 134.

[12] Attlee, C., House of Commons, February 6, 1935. *H. C. Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 297, col. 1167.

[13] *Ibid.*

changes which are demanded in India by setting up a constitution which is merely acquiesced in by a certain number of people, which may be worked by a privileged class, but which will not be supported by any of the advanced parties in India or any of the people who really want a change." He insisted, "Indians must take the responsibility for the future government of their country. The Bill does not do that, and cannot do it, and, therefore, we oppose it."[13]

A. B. Keith, an eminent authority on Constitutions, echoed Attlee's remarks. He wrote, "It is difficult to resist the impression that either responsible government should have been frankly declared impossible or the reality conceded; it is not surprising that neither gratitude nor cooperation is readily forthcoming for a hybrid product such as is the provincial system of special responsibilities and acts to be done according to individual judgment.

"For the federal scheme it is difficult to feel any satisfaction ... on the British side the scheme is favoured in order to provide an element of pure conservatism in order to combat any dangerous elements of democracy contributed by British India. ... It is difficult to deny the contention in India that federation was largely evoked by the desire to evade the issue of extending responsible government to the central government of British India. Moreover, the withholding of defence and external affairs from federal control, inevitable as the course is, renders the alleged concession of responsibility all but meaningless."[15]

Harold Laski, the well-known political thinker, commented that the scheme was cluttered up with all sorts of checks and balances which seemed to "reproduce the worst features of the worst modern constitutions."[16]

Prof. Coupland, however, justified the Act of 1935 as not only confirming and carrying forward the policy of 1917, but because "it contemplated its final culmination in India's attainment of complete equality with the other nations of the Commonwealth within a relatively short space of time."[17] He blamed the shortfall from the goal on to the communal differences for which, according to him, Indians themselves were responsible. It is difficult to agree with the Professor after a close analysis of the Act and the weighty pronouncements of British and Indian constitutionalists.

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[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Keith, A. B., *op. cit.*, pp. 473-74.

[16] Laski to Justice Holmes, July 12, 1932, *Holmes-Laski Letters*, (1953), (1953), Vol. II p. 1396.

[17] Coupland R., *The Indian Problem*, Part I, pp. 146-47

II. Indian Criticism

The Indian Legislative Assembly took into consideration the report of the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament on the motion of the Leader of the House on February 4, 1935. Bhulabhai Desai the leader of the opposition, Jinnah the leader of the Independents, Aney the leader of the Nationalist Party, and others made scathing criticism of the recommendations. Bhulabhai stated, the report "does not either serve the purpose of reconciling the Indians or serve Government's purposes".[18] He appealed to the House in the name of self-respect to reject the same constitution. Jinnah declared the scheme of federation as wholly rotten, totally unacceptable and absolutely unworkable. He moved the amendment, "As regards the scheme of Provincial Government, this House is of opinion that it is most unsatisfactory and disappointing"; and "with respect to the scheme of the Central Government, called 'All India Federation', this House is already of opinion that it is fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable to the people of British India."[19]

The other political parties were even severer in their indictment.

The Hindu Mahasabha, at its session at Kanpur from April 20 to 22, 1935, expressed the view that the Government of India Bill before the Parliament was totally unacceptable to every section of Indian opinion, as the constitution proposed was regarded as much worse than the existing one, and was even reactionary and obstructive to the growth of nationalism and democracy.

The All-India Muslim League met at Bombay under Saiyid Wazir Hasan's chairmanship on April 11 and 12, 1936. The Chairman greeted the new constitution in these words :

"A constitution is literally being forced on us by the British Parliament which nobody likes, which no one approves of. After several years of Commissions, Reports, Conferences and Committees a monstrosity has been invented and is being presented to India in the garb of this Constitution Act. It is anti-democratic. It will strengthen all the most reactionary elements in the country, and, instead of helping us to develop on progressive lines, it will enchain and crush the forces working for democracy and freedom."

"The Muslim classes and the Muslim masses will suffer from the new scheme as much as any other section of the Indian people."[20]

The League adopted a resolution of strong protest against the

[18] Indian Legislative Assembly Debate on the Joint Select Committee Report, February 7, 1935. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1935 Vol. I, p. 123.

[19] *Ibid.* p. 129.

[20] *Indian Annual Register*, 1936. Vol. I, p. 294.

enforcement of the Act of 1935. It declared the rights and responsibilities conferred on the provinces as worthless and ineffective, and the scheme of Indian Federation as mischievous and evil.

Sardar Mangal Singh, presiding over the Khalsa Durbar at Moga on December 28, 1935, referred to the Act of 1935 and said, "The British Government have not considered the unanimous opinion of the whole politically minded India. It therefore cannot be regarded as an agreed constitution but as a constitution which has been forced upon an unwilling and helpless people."

The non-communal parties were equally strong in denouncing the new constitution.

The National Liberal Federation adopted the following resolution on the Government of India Act on December 30, 1935 :

"The National Liberal Federation of India, while reaffirming its resolution of last year regrets that in utter disregard of almost unanimous Indian opinion, the British Parliament not only did not accept a single suggestion for improvement from India's point of view but imposed the Government of India Act 1935 on the country with further objectionable provisions added.

"The Liberal Federation reiterates that no constitution can satisfy Indian opinion which does not approximate as nearly as may be to the constitution of the Dominions and concede to the people of India the full rights of national self-government with the irreducible minimum of reservations for a short period fixed by statute and which further does not make for national solidarity."

The Congress stand was uncompromisingly and unmistakably opposed to the provisions of the Act of 1935. Its demand for complete independence had been formulated in December 1929, and repeated again and again. Gandhiji made it clear at the Round Table Conference in his speech on September 15, and the Congress Working Committee reaffirmed it on January 1, 1932 when it met at Bombay immediately on the return of Gandhiji from England. It declared, "Nothing short of complete independence, carrying full control over the defence, external affairs and finance, with such safeguards as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of the nation, can be regarded by the Congress as satisfactory."

From January 4, 1932 till October 1934 the Indian National Congress was banned, but in defiance of Government order it met illegally at Delhi in April 1932 and in Calcutta on March 31, 1933, and it did adopt a resolution declaring that no constitution was worthy of consideration under the existing conditions. The Working Committee which met in December 1934, rejected the new constitution and resolved :

"Designed as it is to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and

exploitation of the country by alien people under a costly mask, it is fraught with greater mischief and danger than even the present constitution."

Jawaharlal's reaction to the White Paper was characteristic of a radical and a socialist. He held the Paper guilty for converting "the whole country into a glorified Indian State", binding India to the City of London, and for creating "an impregnable defence of all vested interests, and additional vested interests were going to be created. Indian revenues were mortgaged to the hilt for the benefit of these interests. ... There was going to be provincial autonomy but the Governor would be a benevolent and all powerful dictator keeping us in order. And high above all would sit the All-Highest, the Supreme Dictator, the Viceroy, with complete powers to do what he will and check when he desires."[21]

When the Act was passed he wrote, "From the point of view of political changes this proposed constitution is an absurdity; it is far worse from the social and economic viewpoint... Britain retains power without responsibility. There is not even the proverbial fig-leaf to cover the nakedness of autocracy."[22]

The attitude of the Government towards the Congress was a curious mixture of fear and hatred. It was afraid of the tremendous influence of the Congress over the Indian masses and was constrained by fear to make the moves for reducing this danger by conciliatory gestures and hesitant, tentative and meagre transfers of authority. Hatred prompted its efforts to belittle the Congress organisation and to exaggerate the importance of the minorities, the moderates and the Indian States; hatred was equally responsible for the callousness and cruelty in Government's dealings with the non-violent non-cooperation movement—the bans, the indiscriminate large-scale arrests, the lathi charges, beatings and shootings; the illtreatment of prisoners, heavy fines, the confiscation of property and police excesses.

What the Government succeeded in doing was not to break the spirit of resistance but to enhance bitterness and distrust so that all its measures were regarded with misgivings and all its motives approached with incredulity.

The Muslim League agreed with the Indian National Congress in rejecting the Act of 1935, especially the part concerning the central government, but its reasons for doing so were entirely different from those of the Congress.

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[21] Nehru, Jawarharlal, *An Autobiography*, p. 386.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 581.

The League realized that by no political legerdemain could the numerical majority of the Hindus in the central legislature be reduced so as to make the Muslim minority feel absolutely secure. The coming of the federation with the accession of the States threatened to increase the communal disparity as the Hindus predominated in the population of the states.

In order to escape from this predicament their immediate proposal was to reduce the powers of the Centre in three ways—1) by cutting down the list of subjects for the Central Federal Government to a minimum, to the subjects agreed to by the Provinces and the states, 2) by increasing the authority of the Provincial governments to maximum, including the maintenance of provincial armies, and 3) by entrusting the residuary powers to the Provinces.

What the Muslim League wanted was an autonomous Muslim state or states along the north-western and eastern borders of India to serve as counterpoise against the remaining India and to provide a kind of hostage for good behaviour. As the Act of 1935 did not fulfil their aim they declared it totally unacceptable.

The Act of 1935 was a monument of British folly and misdirected energy. It was because of their amazing lack of understanding of the Indian mind, its ideals and aspirations, its capabilities, its strength, its dedication to higher causes and its willingness to pay the price for their attainment that they persisted in their self-imposed disagreeable task.

Biased by pride and prejudice the British rulers, in spite of their experience of 150 years of governing India, treated the nationalist movement with contempt and ridicule. But they found to their cost that their estimates of men and movements, their forecasts of consequences of governmental measures, were woefully wrong. They continued to magnify the importance and strength of such dissatisfied elements as the Muslims and the Depressed Classes of the Hindus and such narrow-minded self-centred people as the Princes, and to belittle the endeavours of the lovers of freedom and progress, genuinely anxious to lift India out of the slough of misery, poverty and ignorance.

Seven long years were wasted. Parliaments, cabinets, Prime Ministers, Secretaries of State, Viceroys, Executive Councillors, governors and sundry others remained engaged in the labour which proved fruitless. Mountain loads of paper, oceans of ink, unnumbered millions of spoken words, jauntings across the continents and seas, conferences, committees were lavishly expended, for what, according to Moore, was nothing more than a chimera.

III. Elections under the New Constitution

The Government announced that the Act of 1935 would come into force on April 1. 1937. But the operation of the part of the Act concerned with the Central Government depended on the fulfilment of the pre-condition that a sufficient number of the Indian states would accede to the federation. As the condition was not satisfied, the constitution of the federal union had to remain in abeyance. From the first of April, then, only the part dealing with the provincial governments could operate.

Paradoxically all the political parties had expressed dissatisfaction with the provincial constitution, and yet all of them resolved to work it and participate in the elections to the provincial legislatures. Now it is true that the criticism of some parties was mealy-mouthed and their disparagement of the Act more ostentatious than substantial. But the others were in dead earnest and outspoken.

Some parties wanted to work the scheme for what it was worth, others to destroy it in order to replace it with an instrument which would serve the true interests of the country and remove the ills from which it suffered. The apparent difference between the two sides, however, was more verbal than substantial. For both sides seemed to expect much more from the new constitution than it could really yield. The reason was partly in the character of the constitution itself. Provincial autonomy, even if it was without the safeguards provided in its constitution, lacked the power necessary for effecting radical reforms in the economic, social and political affairs of the country. For such reforms are based on organic changes in the national economy—large-scale industrialization which involves problems of capital, technology, tariff, transport, communications, exchange, foreign aid, etc. but they are mostly beyond the scope of provincial governments.

When it is remembered that the constitution had to operate under unpromising circumstances, the lack of success and consequent disappointment would not appear surprising.

Unhappily the years during which the new constitution was on the anvil were a period of financial crisis which plunged England into a deep recession and affected its politics. In the words of Ivor Jennings, "what happened in 1931 is one of the parlour games of the Faculties of Economics and Politics."[23]

Principles were driven out by personalities. Labour optimism and vague but forward-looking programme was replaced by reaction and realism of the Tory Party. The October 1931 election which

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[23] Jennings, Ivor, *Party Politics, the Growth of Parties*, Vol. II, p. 289.

squashed the enthusiasm for a new society, a new civilization in England, and awakened interest in the continental ideologies of Fascism and Nazism, exercised influence on the discussions moulding the Indian Constitution in Parliament.

The result was that the Constitution which emerged was neither fish nor flesh, nor good red herring. Its British authors were as doubtful about its fate as the Indians most intimately concerned.

But when the Constitution came into operation, England was confronted with an even more devastating crisis, namely, the international threat created by the ambitions of Hitler who came into power in Germany in 1933. While in England anti-war feeling was growing as shown by the National Peace Ballot, and by the wordy support profusely proferred to the League of Nations in favour of collective security and economic sanctions, Europe was shocked by Hitler's repudiation of the Versailles Treaty and Mussolini's rape of Abyssinia. Worse followed—the German occupation of the Rhineland, Franco's civil war in Spain.

The shadows of war began to lengthen and England was soon engulfed in problems of rearmament, preparations for the coming conflict and hectic diplomatic negotiations.

India which in recent times had occupied a great deal of the attention of British Parliament fell into the background as the European scene assumed rapidly increasing sombreness. Samuel Hoare whose management of Indian affairs had raised him in public estimation was entrusted with the more important portfolio of Foreign Secretary and Marquess of Zetland (Lord Ronaldshay) took his place at the India Office, in June 1935. Soon after, Willingdon retired and Linlithgow was installed as Viceroy of India on April 18, 1936. The change of the team meant no real change in the policy of Government.

Zetland and Linlithgow were faced with a situation complex and perplexing. The economic situation was deplorable. The unsatisfactory condition in agriculture which resulted from the world depression showed no improvement.

In the field of politics the position was extraordinary. The British rulers had prepared a constitution for India which the political parties had either totally rejected or reluctantly acquiesced in. Yet the Viceroy was coaxing the party leaders to accept it by assurances of cooperation. He told the Legislative Assembly on September 21, 1936:

"My heart-felt plea to every man and woman of goodwill and public spirit is that they may give these Reforms a fair and reasonable trial, and that they will join with me and with the Governors of Provinces in an earnest endeavour to work the new Constitution in a

spirit of tolerance and cooperation, for the honour and good of their motherland."[24]

It is passing strange that in the face of the strong disapproval repeated on many occasions in unambiguous terms by the largest and the most powerful political organisation in the country, Linlithgow believed that those who had to work the Constitution but had no faith in it, would be influenced by his appeal. If the Congress decided to give a trial to the Constitution the reasons were entirely different. The decision was not easy to make, the deliberations were prolonged and the differences of opinion among the various schools of thought sharp.

As early as April 1936, the Indian National Congress had pronounced the proposals contained in the Act of 1935, as even worse than those contained in the White Paper and the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report, and as "designed to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the people of India." But it was resolved that candidates should be put forward on behalf of the Congress to contest seats in accordance with its mandate and in pursuance of its declared policy. On the question of acceptance of office the Congress abstained from expressing any opinion.

The strength of feeling against acceptance of office might be gauged from the speech of Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Congress session held in December 1936. Obviously replying to the Viceroy's appeal, he stated:

"We go to the Legislatures not to cooperate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. ... We are not going to the Legislatures to pursue the path of constitutionalism or barren reformism."

Then after declaring his opposition to the federal part of the Constitution not merely on theoretical grounds, but because it was "a vital matter which affects our freedom struggle and our future destiny," he observed, "it seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy ... is to have nothing to do with office and ministry. It would inevitably mean a kind of partnership with British imperialism ... in the hateful task of the repression of our advanced elements. ... We must think in terms of deadlocks and not in terms of carrying on with the office."[25]

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[24] The Legislative Assembly : The Viceroy's address to the Indian Legislature on September 21, 1936. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1936, Vol. II, p. 100.

[25] The Indian National Congress at Faizpur, Presidential Address of Jawaharlal Nehru, December 27, 1936. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1936, Vol. II, p. 227.

In order to organise the campaign of elections the Working Committee of the Congress appointed a Parliamentary Committee in April 1936, consisting of the seven following persons with the Presidents of all Provincial Congress Committees and Dr. Khan Sahib :

(1) Rajendra Prasad, (2) Bhulabhai Desai,
(3) Abul Kalam Azad, (4) C. Rajagopalachari.
(5) Vallabhbhai Patel, (6) Acharya Narendra Dev, and (7) Govind Ballabh Pant as convener.

Later Vallabhbhai Patel was elected President and Rajendra Prasad and Govind Ballabh Pant as Secretaries, and T. Prakasam, Satyapal, N. B. Khare and a representative from Bengal were added to the committee. A pledge to be signed by candidates for seats in the legislatures was prescribed.

The All-India Congress Committee adopted the election manifesto which drew attention to the increasing poverty of the country, the progressive deterioration of the condition of all classes, the national movement and Government repression, the rejection of the undesirable Constitution of 1935, and its replacement by a constitution framed by a constituent assembly elected by the people. It declared that the Congress legislators' aim would be to end the acts, ordinances and regulations which oppressed the people, to establish civil liberty, to release political prisoners, and to repair the wrongs done to the peasantry.

Its programme was: (1) the transformation of the agrarian system, scaling down of rural debts, providing cheap credit, (2) the improvement of the standards of living of industrial labour, (3) the removal of sex disabilities, (4) the uplift of the scheduled castes, (5) the encouragement of hand-spinning and hand-weaving and other village industries, (6) the search for an agreed solution of the communal problem; "In short to free India, end the exploitation of the people, and build up a strong and prosperous and united nation, resting on the well-being of the masses."

Jawaharlal laid special stress on the first plank of the platform. In his presidential address, he said :

"The major problem of India today is that of the land—of rural poverty and unemployment and a thoroughly out-of-date land system A curious combination of circumstances has held India back during the past few generations and the political and economic garments it wears no longer fit it and are torn and tattered."[26]

According to the President, the solution for the problems of India ought to be approached in the setting of the world situation, as a part

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[26] Jawaharlal Nehru : Indian National Congress, Lucknow, April 12, 1936. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 277.

of the world struggle between the forces of capitalist-imperialism on the one side and of socialism which promised the end of poverty, subjection and exploitation on the other. As independence was the prerequisite for socialism, it was necessary to fight for the freedom of the country first. The fight ought to be mainly directed towards the emancipation and uplift of the masses, and therefore it was the duty of the revolutionary elements of the middle classes to bend their energy to win the confidence and support of the people.

The opportunity for mass contact which the expansion of the electorate (more than four times its former size, to 35 million voters or about 11 per cent of the total population of India) opened out was the main factor in favour of the decisions of the Congress. Naturally an all-out effort was made to capture the maximum number of seats. In this endeavour the work of Gandhiji in establishing the Khadi centres under the All-India Spinners Association was of great help.

But the movement of mass contact raised the difficult problem of influencing the Muslim voter. The mischievous policy of isolating the Muslims within the narrow walls of communal electorates now played its obstructive role, and presented a dilemma which proved insoluble. The only way in which the Muslim electors could be approached was either to set up Muslim candidates who belonged to the Congress organisation or to enter into an understanding with the Muslim political party which had a programme similar to that of the Congress.

The first was not practicable in view of the developments in the Muslim League politics, the second presented difficulties which had been created by the strained relations between the Congress and the League since the break-up of the Unity Conference in December 1928. During the months before the actual elections the leaders of the Congress were divided in their counsels. One section advocated coalition with the Muslim League. It pointed out that the League programme as contained in its election manifesto came very close to the policies of the Congress, and what was more Jinnah and a number of his followers strongly desired to cooperate with the Congress, for many of them were old Congressmen who had separated from the Congress only on the question of safeguards for the Muslims in the constitution. They were otherwise as radical in their views as the Congress liberals. Another reason for effecting the coalition was the fact that the Jamiatul Ulama, an organisation of the Muslim divines which had consistently supported the Congress in the past and suffered from Government repression, had decided to throw in its lot with the Muslim League because of its new orientation.

The objectors to this view pointed to the extremely rigid attitude of the Leaguers on the vital question of separate communal electorates, and secondly, to their doubts about the attitude of the League on the

agrarian policy of the Congress which was antagonistic to the interests of the landholders, who were an influential group in the League.

During the elections the Congress Muslims and the Muslims of radical persuasion were encouraged by the Congress leaders to stand on behalf of the League, in order to liberalize the political outlook of the League so that they might constitute an advanced wing within the Party. Although no formal agreement was effected, many on both sides believed that after the elections, if the question of office acceptance was satisfactorily settled, they would act in cooperation.

The cooperation of the Congress and the League acquired probability from the behaviour of both. The Congress by refusing to condemn the Communal Award and adopting a neutral attitude, left the door open for communal understanding. The Muslims who formed the Independent Party in the Legislative Assembly under the leadership of Jinnah voted with the Congress and the Nationalist parties against the official bloc on all crucial questions. In the circumstances it was not surprising that expectations should be entertained of cooperation between them in the new legislatures.

Early in 1937, goodwill towards one another marked their campaigns. The Congress candidates were fighting against parties which approved of the new constitution and offered cooperation to the Government. In U.P. they opposed the Liberal candidates and Taluqdars and Zamindars, and in Madras the Justice Party, where they inflicted a resounding defeat on Shanmukham Chetty. The Muslim League was opposed by the Unionist Party in the Panjab and its allies in U.P. and Bengal. Thus there was hardly any clash or rivalry between the Congress and the League. Both were opposed by the same groups.

The results were astonishing, exceeding the expectations of the Congressmen themselves. In the provincial elections 54 per cent electors cast their votes and the Congress captured 711 out of the 808 General seats.[27]* It had fielded 58 candidates out of 482 in the Muslim electorates too, and captured 26 seats, nineteen of them in the North-West Frontier Province. The following table gives the position of the Congress in the Legislative Assemblies :

Province	Total number of seats	Seat won by Congress	Percentage
1. Madras	215	159	74
2. Bihar	152	95	65
3. C. P.	112	70	62.5
4. U. P.	228	133	59
5. Orissa	60	36	60

[27] The total number of seats of the Provincial Lower Houses was 1585.

Apart from these five provinces where the Congress commanded an absolute majority, its position in Bombay was very favourable as out of 175 members, 86 or 49 per cent were Congressmen. In the N.W.F. Province it constituted the largest single group, for 19 out of 50 members owed allegiance to it and the rest were divided into small factions. A similar situation existed in Assam, 33 out of 108 belonged to the Congress Party. The Bengal Assembly consisted of 250 members, 60 or 22 per cent of them were elected on the Congress ticket. In the Panjab and Sind its showing was poor, 18 out of 175 or 10.5 per cent in the Panjab and 7 out of 60 or 11.5 per cent in Sind.

Of the 38 seats allotted to Labour the Congress won 18, of the 37 reserved for the landholders 4, and 3 out of 56 for Commerce and Industry. In the six bicameral legislatures with a total of 299 seats in the upper houses, the share of the Congress was 64 or 28 per cent.

IV. Muslim Elections

Since 1927 when the appointment of the Simon Commission had been announced the Muslim League was riven into factions. One section headed by Jinnah determined to boycott the Commission and support the Congress and the Liberal Federation in keeping aloof from the Commission politically as well as socially. The other section led by the Panjab Muslim leader, Muhammad Shafi, decided to cooperate with the Commission. The latter founded the All-India Muslim Conference under the patronage of the Aga Khan. Jinnah who in spite of his severance of relations with the Congress in 1920, entertained regard for the Congress attitude towards Indian problems and was keen on establishing Hindu-Muslim unity, supported the move for solving the communal problem. Although he was not in India during the deliberations of the All-Parties Conference and the Nehru Committee which had taken up the challenge of Birkenhead, he attended the meetings of the Conference at Calcutta. He had realized that the proposals of the Nehru Committee would not satisfy his community and in order to induce it to accept the Nehru Report based on joint electorates he put forward a few amendments, the most important among them being the one for the reservation of one-third seats in the Central Legislature for the Muslims.

The rejection of his amendments by the Conference and the Congress which met immediately after, gave a rude shock to Jinnah. More so because Jayakar and Malaviya, the Mahasabha leaders, launched the attack against him, while the Congress leaders, Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru, instead of defending Jinnah, supported the Mahasabha point of view.

Jinnah who strongly believed in bringing about communal harmony through the mediation of the Congress was disillusioned. His faith in the Congress was shattered. But he was far too independent and patriotic to seek the aid of the British rulers, as many other Muslim leaders were wont to do.

Then followed the Congress of 1929 at Lahore and the declaration of independence, which Jinnah thoroughly disapproved—not because of the nature of the demand, but because of the manner in which it was made by completely ignoring the Muslim League. This further alienated him. Yet at the Round Table Conference he tried to induce the Muslim representatives to accept the joint electorates on which the Congress insisted. In this effort he was thwarted by Fazli Husain and the conservative British politicians. Disgusted with these Muslim politicians and rebuffed by the Congress he felt utterly frustrated. He resolved to retire from Indian politics and to settle down and practise in England. He spent nearly three years away from his country, but watched its affairs closely from afar.

Meanwhile came the Communal Award which widened the gulf between the two communities, the ruthless repression of 1932, 1933 and 1934 which created extreme bitterness against Government, and lastly the decision of the Congress to revive the Swaraj Party and contest the 1934 elections to the Legislative Assembly.

In 1934, the Bombay branch of the League appealed to Jinnah to return to India and stand for election to the Assembly. Jinnah responded, came back in October 1934 and was elected unopposed. Immediately he took in hand the revivification and reorganisation of the League.

Muslim politics were in a confused condition during these years. Both the Muslim Conference and the Muslim League were in a state of suspended animation. Fazli Husain the outstanding personality in the community did not much favour an all-India organisation and believed in provincial organisations suited to local needs.

In the Panjab Fazli Husain's Unionist Party, in Bengal Fazlul Haq's Krishak Praja Party, in U.P. the Nationalist Agriculturist Party of the Nawab of Chhatari, and in Sind Abdullah Harun's independent party came into existence. In the North-West Frontier Province Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan had affiliated his party to the Congress. They all created difficulties for the expansion of the All-India Muslim League branches.

Jinnah's first object was to put new life into the moribund politics. The Muslim leaders were either the hangers-on of Government or camp-followers of the Congress. He resolved to end this humiliating situation.

The membership of the League was small—in 1927 there were

only 1330 members. Its annual expenditure did not exceed Rs. 3000 in 1931-33. At the Allahabad session of the League presided over by Iqbal even the quorum of 75 was not present. The annual League Conferences were held in private houses with meagre audiences. Many members were in arrears in payment of the annual fee of Rs. 5/-, which was reduced to Re. 1/-.[28]

When Jinnah started his endeavour to reorganise the League, he met with little response, especially in the Muslim majority provinces, where local parties existed which were loathe to merge themselves in an all-India organisation. He visited Lahore and drew a blank, and in Calcutta also his success was modest. But he had not to wait for long to achieve his object.

His next task was to lay down the basic principles for the League. In his speech in the Assembly on February 7, 1935, he clarified his stand. On the Constitution embodied in the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report, while approving the provisions for the Muslim representation so long as there was no agreed solution among the Indians themselves, he expressed his total disapprobation of both parts of the Constitution—the federal union and the provincial government. He used even stronger language than the Congress representatives in rejecting them.

On the communal question, speaking at the Delhi College on February 18, 1935, he declared : "If I can achieve this (Hindu-Muslim) unity, believe me, half the battle of the country's freedom is won..... So long as Hindus and Muslims are not united, let me tell you, there is no hope for India and we shall both remain slaves of foreign domination."[29] Even before the Assembly had met Jinnah began on January 23, 1935, talks with Rajendra Prasad, the then President of the Congress, to bring about a settlement, and as they proved unfruitful, Jinnah declared in the Assembly debate his acceptance of the Communal Award.

On other national questions before the Assembly like the Indo-British Trade Agreement, removal of repressive laws and measures, repeal of the Criminal Law Amendments Act, Indianisation of the army, cuts on the general and the Railway budgets and so on, Jinnah's party voted with the Congress and the Nationalists against the Government.

Thus the activity of Jinnah in the Legislature showed that with one exception *viz.*, the communal problem, he and his party hardly differed from the Congress on national policies.

Proof of this correspondence in views was furnished by the Muslim

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[28] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *Pakistan : The Formative Phase* (1960), pp. 191-2.
[29] Saiyid, M. H., *Mohammad Ali Jinnah* (1962), p. 231.

League Conference held in Bombay on 11th and 12th April 1936 convened by Jinnah and presided over by Sayid Wazir Hasan which condemned the Act of 1935.

The President made an appeal for unity in these words : "Is there any moral justification left for perpetuating differences, when the supreme need of the country is its struggle for freedom in unity? A united India will be a force to be reckoned with, not the helpless victim of callous and irresponsible government."[30]

It is difficult to differentiate between the vigorous phrases of S. Wazir Hasan and of Jawaharlal Nehru, or in the contents of the resolutions passed by the League or the Congress on this subject.

At this session of the League it was decided to authorise Jinnah to form a Central Election Board of 35 members under his presidentship for contesting the provincial elections. Jinnah selected the members of the Board from all over India. Among the names chosen there were members of the Muslim Unity Board,[31] who represented the nationalist Muslim group, a number of old Khilafatists, Ahrars and members of the Jamiatul Ulama.

The Board held its first meeting at Lahore on June 8, 1936, and adopted the election manifesto, which declared that the League stood for "full responsible government for India", deplored the enactment of the Constitution of 1935, accepted the Communal Award, but rejected the Federal and Provincial Constitutions and defined the programme for election :—

"to protect religious rights; to secure repeal of all repressive laws; to reject all measures which are detrimental to the interest of India, which encroach upon the fundamental liberties of the people and lead to economic exploitation of the country; to reduce the heavy cost of administrative machinery—central and provincial, and allocate substantial funds for nation-building departments; to nationalize the Indian army and reduce military expenditure; to encourage development of industries, including cottage industries; to regulate currency, exchange and prices in the interest of the economic development of the country; to stand for social, educational and economic uplift of the rural population; to sponsor measures for the relief of agricultural indebtedness; to make elementary education free and compulsory; to protect and promote the Urdu language and script; to devise measures for the amelioration of the general condition of the Musalmans; and to take steps to relieve the heavy burden of taxation and create healthy public opinion and general political consciousness throughout the country."[32]

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[30] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1936, Vol. I, p. 294.

[31] The five members of the Unity Board were : Shaukat Ali, Khaliquzzaman, Husain Ahmad Madni, Kifayat Ullah and Ahmad Said.

[32] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1936, Vol. I, p. 301.

A comparison with the manifesto approved by the All-India Congress Committee on August 22, 1936, reveals substantial similarity of the two declarations.

Jinnah now resumed activity for the realization of his dual aim. In the Assembly session of 1936 he again offered his cooperation to the Nationalist Party, with the result that several grants were rejected and the amendment of Jinnah that the Ottawa Pact be terminated forthwith was carried.

In a speech early in March 1936, Jinnah said, "I displeased the Muslims (at the Round Table Conference), I displeased my Hindu friends because of the famous 14 points, I displeased the Princes because I was deadly against their underhand activities and I displeased the British Parliament because I rebelled against it and said that it was all a fraud..... But whatever I have done, let me assure you there has been no change in me, not the slightest, since the day when I joined the Indian National Congress. It might be I have been wrong on some occasions, but it has never been done in a partisan spirit. My sole and only object has been the welfare of my country."[33]

He advised the Muslims to organise, for he believed that if Muslims would speak with one voice, a settlement between Hindus and Muslims would come quicker. He did not regard the separate electorates or the communal award as an ideal arrangement, for he wanted to replace these by something better. On October 20, 1936, he declared, "If out of 80 million Muslims, I can produce a patriotic and liberal-minded nationalist bloc, who will be able to march hand in hand with the progressive elements in other communities, I will have rendered great service to my community."[34]

Although in the Muslim majority provinces his mission failed. in the minority provinces he had already received much encouragement. For instance in U.P. in early February 1936, Khaliquzzaman and members of the Unity Board met Jinnah. The account of the meeting is as follows :—

"Mr. Jinnah began by telling us that he himself was very much dissatisfied with the Muslim League leadership, which consisted mostly of big landlords, title-holders and selfish people, who looked to their class and personal interests more than to communal and national interests and who had always been ready to sacrifice them to suit British policy."[35]

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[33] Quoted by Zaidi, Z. H., "Aspects of the Development of Muslim League Policy, 1937-47," in Philips, C. H. and Wainwright, M.D. (ed.); *The Partition of India*, (1970), pp. 249-50.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

[35] Philips and Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 154

They were assured that Jinnah would form a Parliamentary Board to fight the elections in which the people of their party would be in a majority. On this assurance they promised to defer any decision with regard to the elections. Jinnah was true to his promise, and naturally there followed the formation of the UP Parliamentary Board which included Khaliquzzaman and others.

When in January 1937 the elections started, the Muslim League went into action with the handicap that in the Panjab, Bengal, Sind and North-West Frontier Province, it lacked support. In view of these circumstances the League could not achieve any striking success there. In the Panjab the League was routed, it obtained only 2 out of 86 Muslim seats, one of the Leaguers defected to the Unionist Party. In Bengal it did better as it won 40 out of 119 seats. The Leaguers joined with the Krishak Praja Party and the alliance commanded the majority. In Sind and N.W.F. Province the Leaguers failed to annex any seat.

In the Hindu majority provinces they secured better results. In U.P. where the Muslims had been allotted 64 seats, the League captured 27 (29 according to Khaliquzzaman), the Independent Muslims 27; the National Agriculturist Party 9 and the Congress 1.

In Bombay the League obtained 20 seats out of 29, and in Madras 11 out of 28.

On the whole their success was very modest as they could secure less than twenty-five per cent of the Muslim seats all over India. This weakened their position in negotiating with the Congress on the issue of the composition of ministries.

Unfortunately the Congress record regarding Muslim seats was very much worse. It was able to capture only 26 or 5.4 per cent seats. This showed that the claim of the Congress to represent the Muslim community was exaggerated.

V. The Question of Office Acceptance

The elections were over and Congressmen were legitimately jubilant over their success. The electorate had given to the Congress its confidence in an ample measure and proved the assertions of the Tories to the contrary as utterly wrong. The assumption of the rulers of India was that the masses of India trusted them and looked upon them as their true benefactors. The victory of the Congress exposed the utter hollowness of such self-deluding notions. The claims of the party which stood for complete independence from foreign rule and immediate termination of the benevolent government of the self-appointed trustees of India was fully vindicated by the people

The election immediately raised the problem of acceptance of office. The Congress leadership was divided on the issue. Jawaharlal in his presidential address at Lucknow urged with great vehemence the outright rejection of office. He said :

"To accept office and ministry under the conditions of the Act, is to negative our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept the position, for it would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in the repression and in the exploitation of our people."[36]

He argued that under the Act Indians would have responsibility without power, and even the responsibilities which were transferred were hedged with undemocratic safeguards and reserved powers and mortgaged funds. Psychologically it would be wrong to delude the masses into imagining that India could get any real power or real freedom through working the legislatures. He concluded :

"I am convinced that for the Congress to favour the acceptance of office, or even to hesitate and waver about it, would be a vital error. It will be a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out."

Instead he advocated the development of contacts with the masses, organising them on the model of Soviet Russia and establishing exchange of influence between the Congress and the people.

"The question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office by Congress members elected to the legislatures under the new constitution will be decided by the AICC as soon after the provincial assembly elections as is practicable." With this resolution the Congress postponed the decision at the Faizpur (Maharashtra) session on December 27 and 28, 1936. Jawaharlal who presided reiterated his previous stand on the question.

But Jawaharlal was in a minority both among the members of the Congress Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee who regarded acceptance of office as the inevitable corollary of participation in the elections. The consequence was that the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi on March 17 and 18, 1937 resolved :

"On the pending question of office acceptance, and in pursuance of the policy summed up in the foregoing paragraphs, the All-India Congress Committee authorizes and permits the acceptance of office in provinces where the Congress commands a majority in the legislature."[37]

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[36] Nehru, Jawaharlal, Presidential Address, Lucknow, April 12, 1936. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1936 Vol. I, p. 272.

[37] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol. I, p. 178.

On the 19th and 20th March a Convention of Congressmen including members of the Legislatures and the All-India Congress Committee met at Delhi, at which the Congress resolutions on the rejection of the constitution, convening of a Constituent Assembly for adopting a new constitution and determining Congress policy in the legislatures were passed. All members were required to take the pledge "to work under the discipline of the Congress to the end that India may be free and independent and her millions freed from the heavy burdens they suffer from".[38]

Before accepting office offered by the Provincial Governors another hurdle had to be crossed. The Congress demanded an assurance from the Governors that they would not use their special powers of interference or set aside the advice of the ministers in regard to constitutional activities. This meant an abrogation of the safeguards and reservations which were provided in the constitution for the protection of vested interests and the minorities.

The demand created a deadlock, for it raised the question whether it could be met without amendment of the law of the constitution. Months passed as the controversy continued. Arguments for and against the Congress demand and its legal and political aspects were bandied about. Speeches were made by Zetland and Hoare in Parliament, Lothian wrote in the London *Times* and spoke in the House of Lords. Gandhiji at whose instance the demand was made replied and tried to explain the rationale of the demand. Meanwhile interim non-Congress ministries were inducted into office and the constitution appeared to be on the brink of breakdown. Then on June 21, the Viceroy made a statement. He admitted that the Congress apprehensions were genuine, but pointed out they were based on misapprehensions. He gave the assurance :

"The executive authority of a Province runs in the name of Governor, but in the ministerial field the Governor...... is bound to exercise that executive authority on the advice of the ministers. [Except for certain strictly limited and defined areas] the ministers are solely responsible and they are answerable to the provincial legislature. ....There is no foundation for any suggestion that the Governor is free, or is entitled, or would have the power to interfere with the day-to-day administration of a Province outside the limited range of the responsibilities specially confided to him."[39]

The assurance greatly altered the situation, and the Congress Working Committee felt that the substance of their demand had been

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[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 181-82.

[39] Lord Linlithgow's statement on the Governor's position, 22 June 1937; See C. H. Philips, *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, pp. 334-5

conceded. It, then, met at Wardha on July 5, and resolved to permit Congressmen to accept office where they were invited thereto. On July 7, 1937, the Congress ministers assumed office.

VI Congress League Differences over Formation of Ministries

The constitutional obstacle was removed, but a serious political difficulty dogged the steps of the Congress. The constitution had indicated that in choosing the ministers, the Governors would keep in mind the claim of the minorities. Did minority mean the members of the minority community belonging to the majority party in the legislature, for example the nationalist Muslims in the Congress, or the members of a minority elected by the Communal electorate and belonging to a communal organisation independent of the Congress?

The question became acute in U.P. where the Muslim League had won 29 out of 64 Muslim seats. But more important considerations were involved than the mere numerical strength of the League. The Muslim League of 1936 was not the old League of 1906 or of 1919. It was a vastly changed organisation. Its constitutional aim was identical with that of the Congress; its legislative programme differed little from the programme of the Congress. In its composition the old conservative landlord element was no longer predominant.

The case of U.P. was crucial. The direction of the League in U.P. was in the hands of the old Khilafatists like Shaukat Ali and the old Congressmen like Khaliquzzaman. The Provincial Congress leaders had advisedly refrained from putting up Congress Muslim candidates in opposition to the League candidates and, in fact, induced some Muslim Congressmen to stand on the League ticket. The League fought the candidates of the Agriculturist Party which had been organised under the influence of Fazli Husain and encouraged by Malcolm Hailey, Governor of the Province. It did not oppose Congress candidates.

Then the Jamiatul Ulama which had great influence over the Muslim masses, and which since its establishment in 1919, had fully cooperated with the Congress *e.g.*, in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements of 1920-22 and 1930-32, had allied itself with the League in February 1936. The Ahrars, another politically radical Muslim body, also joined the League for the elections, and the Muslim Unity Board of Uttar Pradesh had committed itself to Jinnah on the understanding that the League would fight for complete independence of India.

The fact that the Unionist Party of the Panjab, the Krishak Praja Party of Bengal, the Agriculturist Party of U.P. and similar groups

elsewhere opposed the League was a proof that the League had turned over a new leaf.

The League won its elections in the United Provinces against the opposition of Muslim Taluqdars and Zamindars and obviously helped by the votes of the poorer Muslim classes under the influence of the Ulama. With the help of the League the Congress won the only Muslim seat in the Province.

During the elections the speeches of Jinnah expressed friendliness towards the Congress. In one speech he said :

"Ours is not a hostile movement. Ours is a movement which carries the olive branch to every sister community. We are willing to cooperate, we are willing to coalesce with any group or groups, provided their ideals, their objects are approximately the same as ours."[40]

Again he declared at Bombay : "The Muslim League stands for full national self-government for the people of India. Unity and honourable settlement between Hindus, Moslems and other minorities is the only pivot upon which national self-government for India of three hundred and eighty millions can be constructed and maintained."[41]

In another speech he went so far as to say : "There is no difference between the ideals of the Moslem League and of the Congress, the idea being complete freedom for India. There could not be any self-respecting Indian who favoured foreign domination or did not desire complete freedom and self-government for his country."[42]

On the announcement of the results of the elections it was expected that approaches would be made for cooperation between the two bodies. The first step in this connection was taken when Khaliquzzaman met Jawaharlal Nehru on May 12, 1937, at Allahabad. But no agreement could be arrived at, for Jawaharlal's point of view was that a separate Muslim organisation within the legislature was uncalled for. Then early in July Govind Ballabh Pant the Chief Minister designate of U.P. met Khaliquzzaman and discussed the possibility of a coalition ministry, but without arriving at any definite conclusion.

On July 12, Abul Kalam Azad and Khaliquzzaman met at Lucknow. Three days later Azad gave in writing a paper which contained the conditions on which Congress cooperation was possible. The principal ones were: "(1) the Muslim League group in the United Provinces Legislature shall cease to function as a separate group", "(2) the Muslim League Parliamentary Board in the United Provinces will be dissolved and no candidates will thereafter be set up by the said Board at any bye-election."

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[40] Cited in Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

[42] *Ibid.*, *p.* 84.

The conditions amounted to a warrant of death for the League in the U.P. These conditions were, however, modified later, and Khaliquzzaman and Ismail Khan were prepared to accept them "provided that the Muslim League Party members in the U.P. Assembly will be free to vote in accordance with their conscience on communal matters."[43]

By July 28 the endeavours for an alliance between the Congress and the League in U.P. had come to an end.

In Bengal the Muslim League had won 40 seats and the Krishak Praja Party 39, the rest of the elected Muslim seats belonged to no party. Attempts to form a coalition ministry of the Krishak Praja Party headed by Fazlul Haq and the Congress failed, and the Muslim League coalesced with the Krishak Party in the government.

In the other Muslim majority provinces the Muslim League was too weak to influence the formation of ministries. Even in Uttar Pradesh some of the allies of the League, *viz.*, the Jamiatul Ulama and the Ahrar withdrew their support and joined the Congress Party, on the advice of Abul Kalam Azad.

Many reasons have been advanced to explain why the Congress-League negotiations failed in U.P.

The reason according to Abul Kalam Azad was that Jawaharlal, who was directing the election campaign in U.P., revoked his agreement with Khaliquzzaman that two Leaguers would be included in the ministry, and offered only one post. The League could not accept the change, and the offer of cooperation broke down.[44]

This explanation was contradicted by Jawaharlal who later stated that "there were accounts of certain events which were not correct as the Maulana had recalled them from memory."[45]

The historian of the Congress writes : "Mr. Khaliquzzaman.... who was in charge of the elections of the League candidates and the corresponding functionaries of the Congress in U.P. worked in unison with the Congress..... And the intimacy of consultations and counsels went so far as no League candidate was being run against Mr. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai when he contested a bye-election and was returned unopposed. All that led some people to believe—not without a show of appropriateness, that there would be a kind of coalition ministry. At least Khaliquzzaman's accession to it was taken for granted."[46]

Sri Prakash, a prominent Congress leader who later held high office as Provincial Governor and minister in Nehru's cabinet, in a letter to

[43] Khaliquzzaman, Chaudhry, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 162.

[44] Azad, A. K. *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 160-61.

[45] Nehru, Jawaharlal, Speech in Lok Sabha, March 27, 1959.

[46] Sitaramaya. P., *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, p. 690

Khaliquzzaman wrote, "I recalled the incident after the 1936-37 elections and how the Congress and the League that had worked together in them parted company for the fault of the leaders of the former."[47]

Jawaharlal's explanation was that in 1937 he was eager that the Congress should introduce land reforms in the United Provinces and "therefore was averse to the idea of the Muslim League, which represented some big landowners, joining the cabinet."[48]

This statement shows that the principle of homogeneity of views and collective responsibility of the Cabinet were involved in the matter and baffled the efforts at cooperation.

Khaliquzzaman maintained that the original conditions suggested by Azad for including the League members in the ministry amounted to the suicide of the League. These were later modified, and he was prepared to accept them provided the League ministers were permitted to vote according to their conscience on communal matters—"religion, religious ceremonies, languages, culture, services, etc." On this the talks broke down.

It has been suggested that during the elections the Congress flirted with the League because it was not certain of its success in the elections. But when the elections sent Congressmen in absolute majorities into the legislatures, they had no more need to depend upon the League or other parties for running governments. The fact that the League had failed miserably in the Muslim majority provinces showed that it had not much hold on the Muslim community and desertions were taking place in its ranks. Its support had thus little value in settling the communal problem.

However, apart from such considerations, some very basic issues had arisen. Jawaharlal gave expression to them in his talks and speeches. For instance, he told Khaliquzzaman, "Really the Hindu-Muslim question in India was confined to a few Muslim intellectual landlords and capitalists who were cooking up a problem which did not in fact exist in the minds of the masses. He ridiculed the idea of Muslims having any separate organisation carried on within the precincts of the Legislatures."[49]

Speaking at Calcutta after Jinnah's speech inaugurating the election campaign in Bengal, Jawaharlal stated that Jinnah's words implied, "in politics and social and economic matters the Moslems must function separately as a group and deal with other groups as one nation deals with another." He went on to say, "I come into greater touch with

[47] Khaliquzzaman, C., *op. cit.*, p. 188.
[48] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[49] Khaliquzzaman C., *op. cit.*, p. 157.

the Moslem masses than most members of the Muslim League. I know more about their hunger and poverty and misery than those who talk in terms of percentages and seats in the Councils and places in the State service."[50] He told Jinnah in a letter in January 1937 :

"In the final analysis there are only two forces in India today—British imperialism and the Congress representing Indian nationalism."[51]

Thus he seemed to refuse even to recognise the League.

In his address to the All-India National Convention at Delhi on March 19, 1937, Nehru analysed the causes of Congress failure in returning Muslim candidates to the legislatures and said :—

"We failed because we had long neglected working among the Muslim masses and we could not reach them in time..... The communal problem of which we hear so much, seemed to be utterly non-existent, when we talked to the peasant, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh..... I have no manner of doubt that they are turning to the Congress to seek relief from the immeasurable burdens, and their future cooperation is assured, provided we approach them rightly and on the basis of economic questions."[52]

Behind Jawaharlal's trenchant phrases was the conviction, which was the first principle of the Congress, that India was one and the Indian nation was an integrated whole binding all those living within the geographical boundaries of India into one community.

The Muslim League which till 1937 still adhered to the idea of one country, one nation and one state, insisted that the Muslim community should be recognised as a sub-nationality possessing its own culture, language, religion, traditions and personal laws which involved separate political interests and hence constitutional safeguards.

But exaggerations apart, were the differences between the Congress and League point of view really substantial? The three main points of dispute were:

(1) The approval of the Congress to fight the elections of 1937 in order to propagate the Congress ideal of Swaraj, and later to accept office, with the ostensible aim of wrecking the Constitution of 1935.

The League's view was identical, *viz.*, to achieve full responsible self-government or Swaraj; but the League wanted to enter into office to work the Constitution for what it was worth. Jinnah considered the Congress attitude hypocritical and unrealistic. He pointed out that in 1923 the Swaraj Party had put forward the same aim, but in practice its conduct belied its profession.

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[50] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *op. cit.*, p. 85 (Quotes *Statesman*, Weekly, Overseas edition, Calcutta, January 14, 1937).

[51] Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims, A Political History*, p. 251.

[52] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol. I, p. 208

The subsequent functioning of the Congress ministries in the Provinces proved that Jinnah was right.

(2) Concerning the communal award of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald the attitude of the Congress was neither of approval nor of disapproval, but of striving for a voluntary settlement between the communities.

The League wanted that the Award should be accepted provisionally and meanwhile efforts should be made to replace the Award and reconcile the communities through negotiation.

(3) The hardest difficulty was caused by the Congress refusal to recognise the independent entity of the Muslim League, and behind it that of the Muslim community as a political group or nationality.

Unfortunately both the Congress and the League suffered from misunderstandings on this point. The Congress sentiment of the unity of India was not only sincere, but deep-rooted. Since the dawn of Indian history the country which lay between the Himalayas and the Indus in the north and Cape Comorin and the Indian Ocean in the south and was laved by the seas on the east and the west appeared to the minds of the people as one indivisible whole. The land was consecrated in the utterances of their ancient seers and in the songs of their minstrels. It had been adored as the abode of saints, reformers and poets of all religions and lauded as the stamping ground of empire builders, heroes and conquerors, the home of statesmen, administrators and warriors. It enshrined monuments of unparalleled splendour of both communities. It was the nursery of the creators of beauty, of craftsmen in stone, silk, cotton, gold, silver and steel. Unity was the deepest yearning, and the most entrancing vision of the Indian soul.

The thought of breaking the unity of India was revolting. But in sentiment, however precious, realism required its consideration in a more objective and detached manner. The unity of India in imagination and ideal was far from its factual realization in history. Only occasionally and for limited periods of time did the frontiers of political India or the Indian state actually coincide with its natural geographical boundaries. For instance, under the Mauryas in the third century before Christ for half a century, under the Khaljis and the early Tughlaqs for a short duration, under the Mughal Emperors from the middle of the 16th to the beginning of the 18th century, and lastly under British rule for a hundred and more years, was India politically united; otherwise for much longer intervals the north-western, eastern, and the southern regions of India existed apart under their own governments.

Obviously the continuance under one order was desirable from economic and political points of view. Together the two supplemented each other's economy and therefore guaranteed speedier economic

development of the whole. Together they could resist foreign dangers more successfully and maintain their independence and integrity with greater efficacy. Together they could play a much more influential role in world affairs than by remaining divided and apart. Nevertheless these two groups of differentiated territories had as much moral right for recognition as sub-nationalities as the rest of India.

Against Jawaharlal's contention that there were only two parties in India, Jinnah's outburst asserting the existence of three was justified. But the argument by which it was supported was false, for by no stretch of imagination could the two propositions of Jinnah involved in his assertion be accepted, *viz.*, (1) that the Hindus and the Muslims had nothing in common, and were, therefore, two separate nations, and (2) that all Muslims of the Indian subcontinent constituted a separate nation, and therefore needed a separate state.

Apart from the fact that the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims in culture and modes of living were highly magnified, it is relevant to point out that even in the matter of religion the Indian Muslims were more Indian in outlook than foreign Muslims. An eminent authority on Islam and a sympathetic observer of Pakistan affairs writes:

"Islam in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent is *sui generis* on account of centuries of proximity with Hinduism and of long Muslim minority rule over a Hindu majority."[53]

Another equally serious cause of misunderstanding was the conflict of views concerning the Muslim League's demand for ensuring the security of Muslim interests. Jawaharlal asked what were these interests. For they were either cultural and religious, or political.

So far as the first type was concerned, the Congress had solemnly declared, not once but many a time, that they would be safeguarded by the Constitution to the complete satisfaction of the Muslims.

With regard to the second type, his view was that the political interests were by and large economic interests, interests concerned with the production and distribution of wealth. By their very nature they were bound to be common to all the Indian people, irrespective of religious, social and cultural differences. They could not, therefore, admit of differentiation on the basis of community. There could be no special economic rights apart from general rights, which required any special constitutional or statutory safeguards. The problems of all primary producers—the peasants, of all workers engaged in industry and of all traders and businessmen were identical whatever their religion.

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[53] Rosenthal, E. I. J., *Islam in the Modern National State* (1965), pp 246-47.

The economic interpretation of political activity logically indicated that communal politics was self-contradictory; and hence a political party organised on communal basis was wholly unjustified.

On the other hand, the leaders of the Muslim League, without much philosophizing about it, came to entertain the view that the economic content did not exhaust the political function. Political activity was distinct from religious, cultural and even economic activity. The distinguishing characteristic and the essence of politics is power—the capacity to make decisions concerning social, economic and national matters and to execute them. The League, therefore, in claiming a guarantee of rights, demanded a share in the power of decision-making and executing

It came to realize that this power did not reside in paper constitutions or in the articles of a statute. But till 1935 it was unable to clearly understand and formulate the plan by which it could obtain a share in political power. Between 1937 and 1939 it lost the confidence that safeguards, reservations and other devices of constitutional procedure and structure could achieve the objective. Rightly or wrongly it came to the conclusion that the only solution was a state of their own in which they were sovereign.

In clear terms Jinnah told the Jamiat-ul-Ulama—the body of Muslim theologians, in 1936 that the Muslim problem was primarily a political problem. Religion, culture, language, personal law were not the essence of the matter, nor the fundamental issue.

Both the Congress and the League did realize eventually—after irreparable damage had been done to their mutual relations, that both were right and yet both were wrong. In the correspondence between Nehru, the President of the Congress, and Jinnah in the months of January and February 1938, Nehru reversed his previous view about the Muslim League. He wrote on February 4, 1938 : "I am very glad to find from Nawab Ismail Khan and Chaudhury Khaliquzzaman that the U.P. Muslim League or the U.P. Muslim League Parliamentary Board, accepted this programme (prepared by the Working Committee of the Congress in 1937). This included our objective of independence, our demand for a Constituent Assembly, our general attitude to the Constitution Act and the Federation, and our methods of work inside and outside the Legislature. It referred also to our agrarian and labour programmes. Thus, there appeared to be a very large measure of agreement between us not only in regard to fundamentals but even regarding many details."[54] This realization ultimately led to the admission on the part of the Congress to the right of secession of the two regions, western and eastern, and the abandonment by the Muslim

[54] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. I, p. 364

League of the pretension that the entire Muslim community of India was part and parcel of the Muslim nation.

Nor was the Congress attitude regarding the principle of the homogeneity of the cabinet unassailable. For it raised the question whether the Congress was a political party or a national movement in which groups with different views had united together to secure one object, *viz.*, independence. There were to be found within its fold rightists like Malaviya, centrists like Patel and Rajendra Prasad, leftists like Jawaharlal Nehru, socialists like Jayaprakash Narayan and Narendra Dev, and communists. It was doubtful whether they all agreed on Jawaharlal's economic or land reform programme.

The Muslim League rested its case on clauses VII and IX of the Instrument of Instructions to the Provincial Governors. Clause VII said: "In making appointments to the Council of Ministers, the Governor shall use his best endeavour to elect the Ministers in the following manner, that is to say, in consultation with the person who in his judgement is likely to command a stable majority in the legislature to appoint those persons (including so far as practicable members of important minority communities) who will best be in a position collectively to command the confidence of the legislature."

Clause IX referred to the special responsibility of the Governor for the safeguarding of the legitimate interests of the minorities, "requiring him to secure, in general, that those racial or religious communities for the members of which special representation is accorded in the legislature . . . shall not suffer, or have reasonable cause to fear neglect or oppression."[55]

It may be pointed out that even in the home of Parliamentary form of government, England, no absolute sanctity attaches to the principle of collective responsibility. Not to go back far, there was the example of the Coalition Government in 1931 which had Ramsay Macdonald (Labour) as its chief and Baldwin (Conservative) as the second in command. Four years later in 1935, the position was reversed, but both continued in the coalition government. In 1932, there was a sharp difference of opinion among the members of the coalition cabinet. The majority was in favour of a general tariff to protect British industry, the minority including Samuel, a Liberal, and Snowden, a Labourite, were opposed and were prepared to resign. But the crisis was resolved by deciding that the minority should not resign, but should be permitted to differ even to the point of speaking against the measure in Parliament.

Admitting that there could be two opinions concerning the consti-

[55] Banerjee, A. C., *Indian Constitutional Documents*, (2nd Edn., 1949), Vol III, pp. 321-22

tutional propriety of the decision to refuse the appointment of Muslim Leaguers to the Congress Cabinet, it is difficult to justify its wisdom.

Azad's comment on Jawaharlal's action was, "sometimes he is so impressed by theoretical considerations that he is apt to underestimate the realities of the situation."[56]

But although Jinnah's revolt may evoke sympathy and his indignation against Congress leadership may be justified, it is not possible to approve of some of his pronouncements. For instance, in April 1937, he reproved the U.P. Parliamentary Board for trying to wreck his plan to organise the Muslims on all-India basis and warned them against arranging a provincial settlement with the Congress, without the consent of the League. But the Leauge Board expressed the desire to explore cooperation or coalition with the Congress, or any other party, on the basis of an agreed programme.

His actions led to untoward consequences. There was revolt in the League camp, for, disappointed with the Congress, Jinnah sought to obtain the adherence of the Muslim members of the Legislature who had refused to join the Muslim League and formed their own parties.

The flirtations with the Agricultural Party in U.P. annoyed the nationalist Muslims like the members of the Jamiat-ul-Ulama, Ahrars and others. Ahmad Husain Madani, a highly respected leader of the Jamiat, explained in his pamphlet the reasons which obliged the Jamiat to sever its relations from the League. Among them the most important was the breach of promise by Jinnah that the League would not cooperate with reactionary Muslims.[57]

In losing the cooperation of Jinnah the Congress suffered impairment of its strength. In 1937, Jinnah was the only Muslim leader of stature who had an all-India status. His only rival, Fazli Husain, had died in July 1936. The Muslim leaders of the Panjab, Bengal, Assam and Sind, were provincial figures and their political organisations were limited in their influence.

Jinnah towered high above them all. In ability, experience and character there was none to equal him. He was the sole dictator of the Muslim League which was now recovering from its earlier decline as a result of his vigorous drive to become the only representative organ of the Muslims of India. Its competitor the All-India Muslim Conference was dead.

The retort which Jinnah made to Jawaharlal's declaration about the League, was the expression of the perturbation of the League at the exodus of their allies, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama and others from the

[56] Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 160.

[57] Madani, Ahmad Husain, *Mr. Jinnah aur uska Purasrar Muiama* (Urdu). *Mr. Jinnah, mysterious enigma and its solution*

League, and the threat contained in the Congress resolution regarding the mass contact movement.

Iqbal had warned Jinnah, "Personally I believe that a political organisation which gives no promise of improving the lot of the average Muslim cannot attract our masses" and advised, "in order to make it possible for Muslim India to solve these problems it is necessary to redistribute the country and to provide one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities."[58]

Jinnah little needed any spur from Iqbal. He had proclaimed that he would build up a power which could not be ignored. He went all out to achieve this. He displayed such daemonic energy and implacable determination in the pursuit of his object as to astonish everybody. In his fury he bade adieu to the principles he had advocated throughout his life—constitutional methods for achieving responsible government, communal harmony and cooperation in order to offer a united front against foreign rule, separation of religion from politics, secularism, rejection of mass intervention in political movements.

In the Muslim League session held at Lucknow from October 15 to 18, 1937, when the Congress ministries had been in power for about 3 months, in his presidential address, Jinnah charged the Congress for the alienation of the Musalmans more and more by following a policy which was exclusively Hindu, and since they had formed the governments in the provinces they had "by their words, deeds and programme shown that the Musalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hands."[59]

He warned the Government in these words · "Here it will not be out of place to state that the responsibility of the British Government is no less in the disastrous consequences which may ensue. It has been clearly demonstrated that the Governors and the Governor-General . . . have failed to use them (their powers and responsibilities), and have thereby been a party to the flagrant breach of the spirit of the Constitution and the Instrument of Instructions in the matter of appointment of Muslim ministers."[60]

Turning to the Congress he said that the mass contact move which was calculated to divide and weaken the Musalmans was dangerous.

He assured the Muslims of all the Provinces of the cooperation of the League in the work for people's welfare—social, economic and political uplift of the Musalmans, and reminded them that "they have

[58] Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 260-61.

[59] Jinnah, M. A., Address at the Lucknow Muslim League Session, October 15, 1937, *The Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol. II, p. 403.

[60] *Ibid.*

their destiny in their hands, and a well-knit, solid, organised united force can face any danger and withstand any opposition."[61]

His address marks the final break with the past. He said, "No Hindu leader speaking with any authority shows any concern or genuine desire for it. Honourable settlements can only be achieved between equals, and unless the two parties learn to respect and fear each other, there is no solid ground for any settlement. Offers of peace by the weaker party always mean confession of weakness, and an invitation to aggressiveness. Appeals to patriotism, justice and fair play and for goodwill fall flat. It does not require political wisdom to realise that all safeguards and settlements would be a scrap of paper, unless they are backed up by power. Politics means power and not relying on cries of justice or fair play or goodwill."[62]

The die was cast. Separatism had won the day. The seed of Pakistan was abundantly watered with the flood of fear, fury and frustration. Soon it would raise its ugly head above the soil.

The speech had an electric effect. The ministries functioning in Bengal under Fazlul Haq, and in the Panjab under Sikandar Hayat Khan, declared their allegiance to the Muslim League and signed its pledge. Saadullah of Assam followed soon after. According to Khaliquzzaman, "Sir Sikandar and Fazlul Haq saved Muslim India by throwing their full weight at the crucial hour behind the Muslim cause. It was a historic event for Muslim India, and the enthusiasm of the Muslims on the success of the U.P. League was quite in accord with the tremendous gain for them."[63]

There is, however, no doubt that after the Lucknow meeting the League's popularity spread among the Muslims of all classes with extraordinary speed. Powerful impetus was given to this development by the fact that in almost all provincial legislatures the governing party and the opposition were divided on the basis of religion.

In the Province of Bengal out of 250 members of the Assembly, 119 were Muslims divided mainly into two parties—the Muslim League (40) and Krishak Praja Party (39), and the rest more or less independent. There were negotiations between Fazlul Haq, the leader of the Krishak Praja Party and the Congress Party for a coalition, which broke down. Then he in his usual flamboyant manner announced that if he had accepted the Congress offer, "he would have signed the death warrant of Islam." The result was that the Muslims formed one solid bloc of government supporters and the opposition consisted mainly of the Hindu members.

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[61] *Ibid.*

[62] *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah* collected and edited by Jamilud Din Ahmad, Vol. I, p. 33.

[63] Khaliquzzaman, C., *op. cit.*, p. 171

In the Panjab the situation was somewhat complicated by the peculiar composition of the Assembly with three communities, represented in the Assembly in considerable strength. But in the Panjab the Congress had won only 18 out of 42 General seats, and the Unionist Party had captured 96 out of the total of 175, and they had the support of a group of 15 to 20 Khalsa Nationalist Sikhs. Thus the main opposition to the government consisted of the Hindus.

On the other hand, in the provinces under Congress rule the position was reversed. In the United Provinces, where the Congress commanded absolute majority, it had rejected the proposal of the League for the formation of a coalition ministry. In consequence the Muslim League with its 29 members became the spearhead of the opposition and attracted the Muslim non-Leaguers to its fold. Thus there was a stark confrontation between the Congress government comprised overwhelmingly of the Hindus and the opposition consisting principally of the Muslims.

The case of Bihar was similar. In its 152 members assembly the Congress claimed 98 and the Muslims 39 seats. Here again according to the Congress mandate non-Congressmen were excluded from the Government and in the opposition the Muslims formed the majority. Consequently the legislature was divided into the Congress party (Hindu) against the Muslim opposition.

This unwholesome situation was the foreseeable, direct and inevitable result of the separate communal electorates, which had been thrust upon India in pursuance of imperialist interests, although under the pretence of protecting minorities' rights.

As usually happens in party politics, the party in opposition accuses the party in power of all kinds of genuine and imaginary misdemeanours, delinquencies and wickednesses. In view of the communal composition of the legislature, the accusations became draped in communal colours, which made the distinctions sharper, and the gulf between the communities wider.

The real cause of Jinnah's acquisition of preponderating influence in the Muslim community was the favour and support of the Government. In 1937, the Government was thoroughly alarmed by the success of the Congress at the elections. It immediately set to refurbish its armour in order to defeat the Congress purpose. The old weapons were brought out—

(1) conciliate the friends, in this case the Muslims, and use them as a counterpoise against the Congress;

(2) create factions among the politicians, detach them from the lead of the Congress—*e.g.*, the Liberal party;

(3) encourage the fissiparous factors especially those likely to

oppose the Congress, namely, the Scheduled Castes, the non-Brahmins, the Princes; and

(4) use the whole force of Government to thwart and if necessary crush the enemy, *viz.*, the Congress.

In the situation the Government depended upon the Muslims whom they encouraged in every way. They recognised the League as the sole representative organ of the Muslims and pledged not to introduce any reform in the constitution or make any advance towards self-government without the consent of the Muslims.

Armed with the power of veto Jinnah felt he could command whatever he wished.

The approaching outbreak of the war, made the Government utterly reckless. Its hostility towards the Congress which meant opposition to the demand of independence made it blind. Even though Sikandar Hayat Khan warned Linlithgow not to inflate Jinnah, Government surrendered itself into Jinnah's hands, without realising that Jinnah would demand his pound of flesh on his own terms and the British would have to partition India and quit it.

Jinnah who had worked for Indian unity all his life turned his back on it, and was now attracted by a more alluring goal—independent Muslim India.

Thus it was the political short-sightedness and Congress hatred of the British rulers which was responsible for the sudden emergence of Jinnah as an arbiter of India's destiny.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY UNDER NEW CONSTITUTION

I. Congress in Office

On July 7, 1937, the Congress took charge of government in seven provinces from the interim ministries. In the remaining four provinces —Panjab, Bengal, Assam and Sind, non-Congress governments continued functioning since the month of April. In September 1938, a Congress-led combination took office in Assam. All these governments had to work under serious handicaps, so that in the discharge of their duties they were greatly hampered. Every government has to perform two kinds of functions—primary or necessary like the maintenance of law and order, and secondary or accessory like agricultural reform, industrial development, education, public health and social welfare.

The first difficulty of the ministries arose out of the provisions of the Constitution itself. The powers reserved for the Secretary of State, the Governor-General and the Governors constituted serious limitations on the authority of the provincial autonomous governments. But by a gentleman's agreement between the Viceroy and the Congress, the interference of the Governors in the day-to-day affairs of the province was largely curbed, and during the period of Congress rule no cause for serious complaint arose, although on some matters the tension between them reached a high pitch.

Besides, there were difficulties of administration. The ministers were mostly inexperienced, but they were filled with enthusiasm for reforms. In order to execute their policies they had to depend on the permanent services, whose personnel was accustomed to a different type of administration with different objectives, attitudes and activities.

This pouring of new wine into old bottles created problems. The Secretaries of the Ministers were members of the Indian Civil Service. They were able and experienced administrators, but unused to democratic methods and not always convinced of the practicability of some of the ministers' ideas. The majority of the members of the higher Indian services—civil and police, were still Europeans for whom it was not easy to work under Indian masters. Then they were not under the complete control of the ministers. Their appointment, promotion, dismissal, etc., were the responsibility of the Secretary of State. In these circumstances it was not surprising that the ministers should have felt cribbed. But on the whole they pulled together remarkably well.

The real trouble, however, was finance. The lion's share of the total annual revenue of India was appropriated by the Central Government. Less than 40 per cent was distributed among the eleven provinces. This is borne out by the following figures :

(1) *The Central Government*: (1938-39)—*Revenue sources*—(a) customs, excise, taxes (income and corporation), opium and salt monopolies, others, and (b) Railways, irrigation, posts and telegraphs, currency and mint, defence services, administration, department of public works, miscellaneous :... Total : Rs. 119.5 crores.

Expenditure : (a) demands on revenue, debt service, civil administration and works, defence, contribution to provinces, mint and currency; (b) Railways, irrigation, posts and telegraphs... Total : Rs. 122 crores.

(2) *Nine Provincial Governments* (1938-39).

(i) *Revenue* : Land revenue (including irrigation and forest)	Total :	Rs. 35	crores
(ii) *Revenue* : Salt, excise, stamps, registration, motor vehicles, income-tax, civil works, interest, etc.	Total :	Rs. 40	,,
	GRAND TOTAL	Rs. 75	,,
(i) *Expenditure* : Land revenue (including irrigation and forests) ..	Total :	Rs. 11	,,
(ii) *Expenditure* : Salt, excise, stamps, motor vehicles.		Rs. 16.6	,,
(iii) *Expenditure* : General administration, justice, jails, police.		Rs. 24	,,
(iv) *Expenditure* : Education, medicine & health, scientific departments, etc. ..		Rs. 16.6	,,
(v) *Expenditure* : agriculture and industry, etc.		Rs. 4.4	,,
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	Rs. 72.6	,,

Even out of this amount more than 50 per cent was mortgaged for items which were irreducible, leaving little room for improvement or expansion of welfare activities—education, health, industry.

All the schemes of ministers for reform dashed against this wall of lack of resources. Again, some of the main sources of revenue like income-tax and customs which were capable of giving increasing income, were reserved for the central government. The principal item of provincial income—land revenue, was not capable of expansion. In fact, the Congress ministers were pledged to reduce the rents which were too burdensome.

On the other hand, the departments concerned with social welfare and economic development were made the charge of the Provinces.

They had been starved in the past and could absorb any amount of funds. Education and public health cried out for improvement, as literacy was miserably low and death rate inordinately high. Villagers lived in ignorance and squalor without schools or hospitals. Village industries were languishing, agriculture was primitive, roads utterly inadequate. It was impossible with the limited resources at the disposal of the Provinces—in funds and authority, to take effective remedial measures. While India needed a revolution, under the new constitution not even a paltry reform was easy. Considering the enormity of the task and the paucity of means, no impressive result could be expected.

Some of the Congress difficulties were self-created. The Congress Working Committee and the Parliamentary Board guided the ministries and helped them in maintaining discipline in the legislature. They also had to see that the objectives of the Congress were not ignored and gave advice and direction on various matters. In the conditions in which the Congress had accepted office, it was not unreasonable that the ministers in the provinces who had little experience of administration and who were faced with all kinds of difficulties, should receive guidance and advice from the central executive body of the parent organisation. To consider this system, as a serious infringement of democratic practices or as totalitarianism was a piece of hypercriticism.

It implied that while the critics had no objection to the interference of the Governors and Governors General in the affairs of the autonomous provinces, and did not consider such interference as breach of democratic rectitude, they held that if the Congress undertook to play the same part, democracy was outraged.

Coupland has pointed out, "In Britain parties working in the field of local government have become more and more closely associated with national parties. In all federations but one the national parties are concerned to a greater or less degree with the governments of the federal units."[1]

The fact is the Congress did not want that the involvement of Congressmen in provincial affairs should detract attention from the principal aim of achieving complete independence, or create the habit among Congressmen to accept the British-made schemes and to co-operate with the British rulers. They had also to guard against the growth of provincialism and accentuation of provincial interests at the cost of nationalism and the pursuit of Indian objectives.

Jawaharlal constantly reminded the ministers that there was "a grave risk of our getting involved in petty reformist activities and forgetting the main issue. . . . We are apt to be misled by the illusion that

[1] Coupland, R., *The Indian Problem*, Part II, p. 96.

we posses power....It is manifest that the Congress is more important than any Ministry. Ministries may come or go, but the Congress goes on till it fulfils its historic mission of achieving independence for India."[2]

But there was justice in the complaint that the myrmidons of the local Congress organisations interfered with the work of administration —*e.g.*, in postings and transfers of officers, and in ejecting farmers, etc. The Working Committee had to issue a circular warning against such undesirable practices. It said :

"It has come to the notice of the Congress that Congress Committees interfere with the ordinary administration. ... The Congress advises Congressmen nôt to interfere with new course of administration."[3]

For 27 months the Congress governments were on their trial, the non-Congress governments for a slightly longer period. How did they stand up to their responsibilities? Did their record demonstrate the fitness of Indians for self-government or did it not?

Before examining the record and pronouncing a judgement on it, it is pertinent to ask what is meant by "fitness for self-government"— a phrase so lavishly employed in connection with constitutional changes in India. Does history offer any definition of fitness? It does chronicle the rise and fall of almost innumerable states; it does describe their activities and achievements, their internal developments—social, economic, political, cultural and what not, their relations with neighbouring states—war and peace, victories and defeats, it does speculate about the causes—material and moral, environmental and human, to unravel the mystery of historical change; yet it has so far failed to discover the laws which govern them and which fix the responsibility of the various factors in bringing them about.

But do the failures and successes of nations—their rise and fall, explain their fitness or lack of it?

One might consider a few cases for illustration. Were the Athenians fit for democratic government when Solon laid the foundations of the system? And did they lose this fitness when Philip of Macedon deprived them of independence?

Coming to more recent times the same question might be put about modern Europeon nations. Within the last hundred years France failed thrice to save itself from defeat and occupation—in 1876-77, in 1914-19, in 1939-45. On the last two occasions but for the help of other nations France might have become a state of the German federation. Germany lost its independence twice, was defeated, humi-

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 95
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

liated and ravaged. Each time the government which ruled it was destroyed. Could their defeats in war be considered judgements on their fitness? Poland which remained under the rule of foreigners since its partition in the eighteenth century was resurrected after the First World War; but in the Second World War it first came under the domination of Germany and afterwards accepted the role of a camp follower in the communist system led by the USSR.

India had its own independent governments during the past. The ancient Hindu kingdoms and empires passed away. Then the medieval period saw the establishment of many kingdoms—some under Hindu princes and others which were more extensive, under Muslim Sultans. Lastly, the Mughals created a powerful empire covering a vast territory and almost the whole of India. In the eighteenth century the empire broke up, giving an opportunity to a European people to bring India under their domination.

Is this record very different from that of the Roman empire from the third century B.C. to the 5th century A.D., or the Carlovingian empire of the eighth and ninth centuries, or of the Hohenstauffens in the later middle ages, or of the Spanish empire in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Does their eventual regress prove the unfitness of the people who built up the empires for government?

Does the melancholy story of the conquest of the indigenous races, for example, the original inhabitants of Mexico—the Aztecs, by the Spanish conquistadors, prove that they were incompetent rulers, for although they built up large kingdoms and raised splendid monuments, accumulated wealth and power in the heyday of their career, they were unable to withstand the attacks of their better-equipped, perhaps less cultured adversaries?

It was one of the foibles of the British ruling class to suppose that none but the Anglo-Saxons possessed the virtues which are required for success in a democratic parliamentary form of government. But independence and a particular form of government are two completely distinct matters. In the first place no particular form of government can be regarded as permanent. Parliamentary democracy is a recent growth even in the West—not earlier than late eighteenth century in England, the pioneer in this form of government. During the last century and three-quarters of its existence it has undergone a number of changes and it is not possible to predict what further changes are in store. Greek political thinkers considered constitutional change as cyclic. Spengler forecast the downfall of Western civilization in his book, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes,* (Decline of the West) which he wrote about the time of the First World War. Some writers look nostalgically to the return of the medieval socio-political system.

Balfour in a speech in the House of Commons on the question of

constitutional reforms in India did suggest that the claim for independence should not be confounded with the proposal to establish British parliamentary form of government. Morley had earlier recognised that the fur coat which was necessary in the climate of Canada was not suitable for the Indian weather.

It was accidental—the effect of British rule over India, that Indians demanded not only independence, but independence arrayed in the British uniform. Most educated Indians supported this demand, but Gandhiji was not at all fond of the British system.

The British rulers who could not think of independence in any other terms, perhaps genuinely believed that parliamentary institutions did not suit Indian social conditions, and from this they drew the conclusion that India was not fit for independence, which is a *non sequitur.* Soviet Russia, the Eastern European countries, China are independent, but their governments are not free parliamentary democracies.

The demand of India was independence, democracy and unity. The experiment of 1937-39, has to be assessed in the light of this demand.

The demand remained under prolonged microscopic scrutiny culminating in the Act of 1935, which was riddled with apprehensions and fears of abuse of authority and of wild revolutionary action. Hence the Act was provided with numerous safeguards against all kinds of contingencies. What happened in actual practice?

After the first showdown which took three months to resolve on the basis of an understanding that the Governors would not interfere in the routine administration and leave the ministers free to exercise their authority in accordance with the constitution, no serious clash took place, except one. This was in February 1938, when the Governor General instructed the Governors of the United Provinces and Bihar to reject the advice of their Congress premiers to release the remaining political prisoners accused of serious offences. The premiers of the two provinces thereupon tendered their resignations. But they were withdrawn later when the Governor General gave the assurance that the agreed policy of gradual release after the examination of each case would still be adhered to.

Another case which might have led to a clash occurred in Orissa. The permanent Governor wanted to go on short leave and it was decided to appoint a senior Indian Civil Servant as acting Governor. The ministry objected. The crisis blew over, as the Governor cancelled his leave.

The Governors on their part behaved with restraint. Throughout this period only two bills were vetoed in the North-West Frontier Province, one in Sind and one elsewhere. On the part of the ministers similar anxiety to abstain from annoying or bossing over the services was generally observed. In fact, the ministers who had suffered at the

hands of the executive officers and the police, specially during the struggles, and had entered into office with memories of bitter experiences and legitimate prejudices, showed commendable spirit of co-operation with the services.

If the two aspects of constructive administration, which roused great anxiety, are taken into consideration the verdict is equally favourable. The British Conservative and Liberal politicians were nervous about the transfer of law and order to provincial ministers. It was felt they could not be trusted to act firmly or fairly in these affairs. The conduct of the ministers, however, belied the distrust. Apart from ordinary crime and infringement of laws, there were three main fields of trouble—(1) political agitation, (2) labour strikes, and (3) communal strife.

Agrarian disturbances were due to age-long conditions and were the effect of many factors. These disturbances had a long history which need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that since 1920 when the peasants in U.P. started agitation with large-scale demonstrations the Congress leaders had shown sympathy with their demands and encouraged their efforts to resolve their grievances. When, therefore, the Congress governments assumed charge the hopes and expectations of the peasants rose high.

The Congress election manifesto had promised to work for the amelioration of the condition of Kisans—reduction in rent and revenue, fixity of tenure, relief from the burden of debt, etc. The Kisan Sabhas pressed the governments to fulfil the promises; but they were impatient and did not understand the difficulties of effecting agrarian reform. In some parts of the country, specially in Bihar and to a lesser extent in U.P., there were tumults and even violence. The kisans looted and burnt crops, refused to pay rents, forcibly occupied lands and held out threats to landlords. They demonstrated in large processions and created serious problems for the maintenance of peace and order.

The Governments faced the situation partly by enactment of laws to improve the conditions of tenantry. In U.P. Act XVII of 1939 guaranteed hereditary rights to tenants, provided the fixity of rents for ten-year periods, and abolished a number of abuses. In Bihar similar legislation was passed, reducing rents, curbing the rights of landlords in realization of rent, and ejection of occupancy tenants, etc. In most provinces acts to give relief from debts were placed on the statute book, more adequate famine relief measures were prescribed and marketing facilities were extended.

The ministers personally contacted the villagers and pacified them. The result was that the turmoil subsided.

The labour trouble was acute in the places where large industrial establishments existed—in the Bombay province at Bombay, Ahmeda-

bad and a number of other towns; in U.P. at Kanpur; in Bengal at Calcutta. In this sector too the prevailing conditions were appalling. The Trade Union movement was immature, although communist leaders were trying to organise the growing numbers of factory workers. But the Government of India had taken harsh measures to suppress their activities.

The Congress on Jawaharlal's initiative had begun taking interest in their lot. The Labour Committee of the Congress formulated a comprehensive programme of reform which was approved by the All-India Congress Committee in October 1937. The programme included questions relating to wages, housing, hours of work, holidays with wages, employment insurance, maternity benefits, settlement of disputes, enforcement of Factories Act, and so on.

The discontent at industrial centres was acute with the result that there were a number of strikes. In Ahmedabad and Bombay large numbers were involved. But tact and firmness combined dealt successfully with them and order was restored. In Kanpur strikes began in July 1937 in the textile mills which flared up from time to time but subsided at the intervention of the Congress leaders. The Congress governments appointed committees of enquiry in these cases and implemented their recommendations. In Bombay a Trade Disputes Act was placed on the statute book.

The most troublesome law and order problem was the occurrence of communal rioting. The unfortunate result of assumption of office by the Congress was the worsening of relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The League started a tearing and raging propaganda against the Congress Ministries which penetrated into villages, thus arousing the passions of the masses. The inevitable consequence was the outbreak of turmoil and violence in many places. Whenever Holi and Muharram synchronised or some other festival like Dussehra or Dewali and Id fell on the same dates, peace was disturbed, U.P. and Bihar were the worst sufferers, but there were riots in the North-West Frontier Province as well as the Bombay province and Madras.

In the month of August 1939, the Khaksars (Muslim volunteers), a body organised by Inayat Ullah Mashriqi, an England-returned professor at Peshawar, were led into U.P. The police had to open fire on them. A number of the volunteers were killed, many including the leader were arrested. But soon after the Congress ministry resigned.

According to Government estimates between October 1937 and the end of September 1939 there were 57 serious riots in the provinces under Congress ministries. The total number of casualties was nearly 1,700, of which over 130 were fatal.[4]

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

The facts clearly show that in this important branch of administration the Congress ministries showed both consideration and sympathy for the parties involved and yet did not shirk taking strong measures in case of necessity. This is made clear by their dealings with crime against the state. They made use of the apparatus of coercion without much hesitation against persons and papers who challenged authority or perpetrated violent deeds. In this matter they had the full backing of the Congress. The All-India Congress Committee expressed its opinion in these words :

"In as much as people including Congressmen have been found in the name of Civil Liberty to advocate murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means and several newspapers are carrying on a campaign of falsehood and violence calculated to incite the readers to violence and to communal conflicts, the Congress warns the public that Civil Liberty does not cover acts of violence, incitement to violence or promulgation of palpable falsehoods. In spite, therefore, of Congress policy on Civil Liberty remaining unchanged Congress will, consistently with its tradition, support measures that may be undertaken by the Congress Governments for the defence of life and property."[5]

Plans of Social Welfare

One of the chief reasons for the acceptance of the Provincial constitution was the belief that it gave opportunities for effecting schemes of social welfare. Now every reform depends in the first place upon the resources available in funds and men. These reforms affecting large numbers of people and requiring rational modifications in time-honoured arrangements depend upon large-scale planning which involves national matters partly within the competence of provincial authority, but also exceeding it and trenching upon the sphere of central government. Another set of difficulties is presented by peoples' prejudices and conservative habits. The process is time consuming, but the Congress ministries had only 27 months interval to accomplish their cherished aims. But they wrestled hard and earnestly and with praiseworthy enthusiasm to effect the much-needed advances in almost every department of national life. It was not their fault that the progress achieved was not more impressive.

The sector in which reform was most urgently needed was the field of agriculture which supplied occupation to about three-fourths of the Indian population. Its shortcomings were well-known. Its stagnation accounted for the grinding poverty and misery of the vast masses living in the villages, and its unremunerative character pressed down heavily

[5] Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II, p. 92.

on the whole of national economy. One of the principal charges against the British Government was the neglect of agricultural rural economy. This neglect supplied the reason, the impatience and the ardour with which the Indian National Congress insisted upon the immediate transfer of power to India. In its election manifesto the Congress had proclaimed that "pending the formulation of a fuller programme the Congress stands for a reform of the system of land tenure and revenue and rent, and an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, ... scaling down of debts and the provision of cheap credit facilities by the State."

In pursuance of this announcement, a committee of enquiry was appointed in Madras under the chairmanship of T. Prakasam, the Revenue Minister. In Orissa a bill was passed reducing rents and fixing compensation for zamindars. But on the resignation of the Ministry the Governor-General withheld his assent. In the United Provinces the Act XVII of 1939 dealt comprehensively with the problems of land tenure—occupancy rights, hereditary tenure, ejection from holdings, revision of rents, abolishing detention for non-payment of rent, etc. In Bihar the tenancy legislation reduced both arrears of rent and current rents substantially. The old system of assessment of rent was done away with, the rights of collecting rents were reduced, ejections for non-payments were prohibited. Reform measures were carried out in Bombay, the Central Provinces, and the North-West Frontier Province.

In the field of industry the ministries showed equally commendable zeal. But the problem of industrial development was entirely beyond the power and scope of provincial governments. It involved complicated questions of comprehensive economic planning, capital investment, raising of funds by loans in the country and abroad, taxation, import of machinery and technical knowledge, training of many grades of qualified engineers and technicians, expansion of transport and communication systems, marketing facilities, and so forth, for which all the power and influence of the Central Government needed to be mobilised.

The provincial governments could only tinker with small or medium scale industrial enterprise. Their income was limited and although they had authority to raise loans their capacity to do so was not large. The only source from which their funds could be supplemented was the Government of India which was chary of accepting any such proposal.

The Working Committee of the Congress had considered the appointment of Committees to prepare an all-India industrial plan. In July 1938 the President convened a conference of the ministers of industry and then a Planning Committee was appointed with

Jawaharlal Nehru as Chairman. The Provincial Governments supplied the funds for its expenses. But before the Committee and its numerous sub-committees could complete their labour the Congress provincial governments had resigned.

Among social welfare activities the subject of education was important. The provincial governments were keen about the expansion of education, especially at the primary stage, which had been neglected by the previous government. Here again the main hurdle was funds. Yet efforts were made to increase the budget, to enhance the enrolment of children, to check wastage and enforce compulsory attendance.

A new experiment in primary education was inaugurated by Gandhiji who tried to solve the problem of expenditure as well as that of adjusting education to social needs. His system known as Basic Education which made manual and productive work as the basis of training, was introduced in a number of provinces. But its momentum was lost after October 1939, although the scheme was not abandoned.

Another scheme which received the attention of the ministers related to the education of illiterate adults. Paucity of funds stood in the way of its expansion.

Gandhiji had given a great impetus to the uplift of the scheduled classes. In fact, the advancement of these classes, whom he gave the name of Harijans—God's people, occupied the most prominent place in his plans of social reform. The contribution of provincial governments to the removal of the grievances of Harijans was considerable. Three of these received special attention—temple entry, removal of civil disabilities and education, and legal and administrative measures were taken in their behalf. But untouchability is a disease whose roots go down deep into the Hindu social system and it is a difficult task to uproot it.

In reviewing the work of the Congress governments Coupland, an unsparing critic of the Congress, while deprecating severely what he regarded as the totalitarianism of the High Command, admitted that the governments enjoyed stability, the ministers were capable and hardworking with a high sense of public duty and responsibility, who acquired a grasp over the administrative machine and who dealt with finance in accordance with the recognised principles of public finance.

The Legislatures were well conducted, hardworking and business-like. The achievements of both branches of the regime—legislative and executive, were remarkable in the field of social reform. "The old contention that Indian self-government was a necessity for any really radical attack on the social backwardness of India was thus confirmed."[6]

[6] Coupland, R., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 156.

Hodson, who had been the constitutional adviser to the Viceroy in 1941-42, assessing the working of the provincial governments expressed the opinion, "In social and economic reform, which was the substantive purpose of provincial self-government from the popular Indian view-point, the Ministers were handicapped by financial stringency as well as the need to balance the interests of different sections of their supporters, but the advances made were considerable, and could not have been made by an alien government dependent, as such must be, on the support of vested interests."[7]

Samuel Hoare spoke of "the great constitutional success of Provincial autonomy in India", in Parliament. Linlithgow looked with satisfaction "on a distinguished record of public achievement during the last two-and-a-half years."[8]

Harry Haig, Governor of U. P. and Erskine of Madras paid tributes to the work of the ministers.

The experiment of 1937-39 proved, if any proof was needed, that the British opinion about the capacity of Indians for responsible self-government of the parliamentary type was utterly wrong, and that the theories of fitting India for self-rule by a prolonged course of training under British tutelage were baseless. It also demonstrated that the urgent social and economic problems of the country which could not be solved by a foreign government could be successfully tackled only by the chosen leaders of the people themselves.

The constitution of the Federal Union remained a paper scheme. No one seemed really to want it. A wing of the Conservative Party consisting of influential members was totally opposed to it, because it contemplated a partial transfer of power at the centre, even though it was hedged with numerous safeguards. The majority of the Party led by Baldwin and Hoare had little enthusiasm for it, and was reluctantly driven to its acceptance. They felt their hands were forced by the ill-conceived liberalism of Montagu and therefore they hung halters round the neck of the Federation which made it immobile and unworkable. Two of these were the vetoes of the Muslims and the Princes.

Then neither the Government in England nor the Government of India was at all keen to get it started. According to Templewood (Hoare) and Halifax (Irwin), their successors Zetland and Linlithgow were responsible for the delay in enforcing the constitution. Templewood thought most of the officials in India did not believe in an all-India federation, and therefore the Princes were given little help in making up their minds. Halifax agreed. He wrote: "Freeman (Willingdon) liked the Princes and really disliked the Indian leaders,

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7 Hodson, H. V., *The Great Divide*, p. 70.

8 Coupland, R., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 157.

and Hopie (Linlithgow) has not much use for the Princes and did not really get on human terms with anybody."[9]

Glendevon, son of Linlithgow, in his recent book *The Viceroy at Bay* has controverted the accusation of Templewood and Halifax against his father. His contention is that Linlithgow immediately after his appointment in 1936, took up the question of persuading the Princes to join the Federation, but it was Zetland's caution which prevented him from pursuing the matter vigorously. He issued instructions through the Political Department to all officers that the sooner the Federation came in the better it would be. A time-table was prepared for completing the process of accession. These officers were sent round the States to meet the Princes to explain the provisions of the Act and to give rulings on certain questions put by the Princes.

The effort to expedite the construction of the Federation was, however, restrained by the Secretary of State, Zetland, who was afraid of the opposition of Salisbury and his friends, in particular Churchill. They threatened to oppose the passage of Orders in Council which were necessary to bring the Federation into being.

Later the leading Princes met in Bombay in June and declared the terms of the federal offer unsatisfactory and unacceptable. Linlithgow had asked to be allowed to put pressure on the princes before the Bombay meeting, but Zetland felt helpless in the face of the opponents, "whose tactical position was strong for they were applying all the pressure they could muster to dissuade the reluctant Princes from acceptance".[10]

He concludes: "In the matter of Federation Linlithgow had not been able to mould events as he had wished because his hands were tied. But his tireless efforts to bring the Princes round and his persistent warnings to Zetland from the beginning that time was not on his side show how ludicrous was the criticism levelled against him years later that he had dragged his feet over federation."[11]

Without the consent of the Princes the Federal Union could not be established. Its inauguration was made impossible because the Government had given pledges to the Muslim League that no constitutional advance would be undertaken which was not approved by it. So that even if the Princes agreed and the Liberals supported, the Government would not have ignored the opposition of the League. But it had no genuine desire to part with power, however small its quantum, specially to the Congress. It therefore took shelter behind the Muslim

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[9] Moore R. J., "The making of India's paper federation" in Philips and Wainwright, *The Partition of India*, p. 55.

[10] Glendevon, J., *The Viceroy at Bay*, p. 129.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

League's unwillingness, and what is more made it as intractable as possible.

Says Moore: "In retrospect, the agreement of the First Round Table Conference to proceed by way of an all-India federation can be recognised as condemning India to a constitutional dead end. ... Clever Tory strategy made any central advance dependent on princely accession and made the central responsibility to be called the semblance not the substance of power. Hoare saw the formula for what it was: the diversion of the demand for dominion status: the retreat from Montagu's liberal goal of a democratic unitary policy. ... When Gandhi withdrew from the Round Table, the essentially Tory government proceeded with a scheme to retain Muslim support, conciliate the princes and ignore Hindu British India."[12]

This policy was inspired by the hardly concealed desire to evade transference of power. It encouraged the factors which undermined the federal plan and therefore obstructed the establishment of a constitution conceding responsibility in some central subjects. Linlithgow felt greatly relieved when the opening of the world war gave him the opportunity to bury the unwanted baby.

It is difficult to say whether the unceremonious end of the Federal Scheme was the immediate cause of the partition of India. But there can be no doubt that policy pursued by the British Government between 1930 and 1935 could have no other issue but Pakistan. By the Act of 1935 Britain "brought into being a powerful block of autonomous Muslim provinces in eastern and north-western India, a strong base for Muslim bargaining when the question of central government emerged in more real terms after the federal scheme collapsed. It made Pakistan plausible."[13]

II. The Congress Party in the Central Legislature

The federal part of the new constitution remaining in abeyance, the Assembly as constituted in 1934 continued to function. It contained 44 Congressmen and 11 Nationalists who ordinarily voted with them, under their leaders Bhulabhai Desai and Aney. The Independents who held the balance between the National parties and the Government bloc were led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The main purpose of the nationalists was to make manifest the irresponsible character of the Government of India and to demonstrate that the Indian people had no confidence in the Government and were not prepared to support it.

[12] Moore, R. J., in Philips and Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

This purpose inspired the activity of the nationalist parties. The important occasions to offer opposition to the Government were when voting took place on the Railways and the General budget. The demands for grants on many items were rejected in pursuit of the object. The cut motions were moved in order to ventilate Indian grievances and censuring the Government for their negligence, inaction or antipathy. The Government restored most of the cuts in compliance with the special powers of certification vested in the Governor-General. This was tantamount to an admission that India was ruled by the autocratic fiat of the Governor-General and not with the consent of the elected representatives of the people.

Year after year the empty ritual was repeated in the Legislative Assembly and identical gestures and motions were made with the same results. If it was the budget of the Railways or of the general administration the Assembly would throw out demand after demand—on one occasion thirty demands were rejected in one day, the next day the Governor-General would certify them and then the certified demand would again be voted down. If it was the question of Indianisation of the higher railways service or the military services, again the Assembly would censure the Government and then pass on to discuss the other items on the agenda without disturbing the equanimity of the bemused Government members.

Thus the sessions of the Assembly followed in regular succession year after year, but the people of India were quite indifferent to them except as sounding boards for propaganda against Government or as amusement theatre for the show of shadow-boxing.

The activity of the Congress organisation was largely devoted to fighting the Government of India Act, 1935, and resisting the spirit and purpose which lay behind it. The 1935 Act was devised by ingenious British politicians to evade the demand of independence or Dominion Status staked by the Congress. The issue was overlaid with the protests of reluctant Princes and recalcitrant Muslims, and the responsibility for their attitude was imputed to the Congress, in order to establish Britain's alibi. Thus the Government yielded little, diverted the demand for Dominionn Status, and divided the country into hostile groups—the Congress, the Princes and the Muslim League.

III. The Congress and the States

Unfortunately the Princes, who had readily accepted the plan of an India united in a federation, at the first Round Table Conference, gradually began to feel doubtful of its advantages and apprehensive regarding its effects on their status and authority.

Many influences began to work on their minds immediately after their early declaration—e.g., the Tory politicians in England and the bureaucracy—especially the officials of the political department of the Government of India, and created doubts and apprehensions, so that they lost much of their interest even during the process of constitution making. When the Act of 1935 with the constitution of the Federal Union and the Instrument of Accession of the states to the Union came before them they had a severe shock. Even so early as 1931, Reginald Glancy, adviser to the Hyderabad delegation at the Round Table Conference, had observed: "Now that the outlook is so gloomy and the chance of agreement between the British Indian parties so remote, the Princes have begun to hope that nothing would come of the conference, and that they will be able to continue their sheltered existence."[14]

In 1936, the Princes were both alarmed and confused, and naturally started seeking legal advice from lawyers. Some of this advice was extremely adverse to their accession to the Federation. J. H. Morgan K.C., for instance, so frightened them that they turned to W. Greene, Walter Monckton, G. Simonds, Jowett, Wadham (from USA) and T. B. Sapru (from India). Ultimately they requested the Viceroy to undertake a detailed revision of the Instrument of Accession.

The process of revision took a long time. It was as late as the middle of March 1939 that the Viceroy presiding over the annual function of the Chamber of Princes announced that all the points raised by the States had been settled and the amended Instrument sent to the Princes for signature. He assured the states that constitutional and administrative changes in the States were wholly within their jurisdiction and that no pressure would be exercised on them by the Government.

The Princes requested the Hydari Committee to consider the new Instrument and give its advice. The report of this Committee was unfavourable and then on June 10, 1939 the joint conference of the Princes and their ministers discussed the Report. The new Instrument and the terms of federation were found unsatisfactory and unacceptable.

Before the slow moving machinery of the Government of India could deal with this situation the Great War supervened, and on September 5, the Viceroy informed the Legislative Assembly that the scheme of federal union forming part of the 1935 Act had lapsed for the duration of the War.

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[14] Philips and Wainwright *op cit*, p. 67

During these years the policy of the Indian National Congress towards the problem of the States did not stand still. While the Government in the pursuit of its own policies and interests assured the Princes that the Paramount Power would be bound to maintain their rights, privileges and dignity against any outside attack and affirmed the policy of non-intervention on constitutional issues, the Congress in consonance with its principles of democracy and freedom felt obliged to define its attitude towards the subjects of the States agitating for administrative and constitutional reforms.

When, therefore, the Congress resolved to accept office in the Provinces the question assumed greater urgency. The State subjects naturally expected support from their countrymen—especially the Congressmen, in their struggle against the rulers. Some foolish rulers took stern measures to suppress the agitation and thus obliged their subjects to seek help from British India politicians.

The matter came before the Congress and its early reaction was to express sympathy for the State people but abstain from giving any practical aid in their struggle. It advised the rulers to recognise their people's rights and introduce measures of responsible government, but asked the people to fight their own battles without depending on parties in British India.

The elections of 1937 in which the masses had enthusiastically responded to the Congress call raised great hopes in the minds of the States' people, who after all were the kith and kin of the Indian masses. They also aspired to participate directly in the government of India in case the federal union became a reality.

In 1937 the Congress paid a great deal of attention to the questions of fundamental rights, civil liberties, adult suffrage, mass contact, etc. It was natural that it should consider the application of the principles to India as a whole—irrespective of community, religion or region. Thus interest in State affairs became more animated.

In the Calcutta Congress of 1937, a resolution was passed against the repressive policy of the Mysore Government towards the Congress workers. It appealed to the people of Indian States and British India to give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in their struggle against the State for the right of self-determination.

At the Haripura Congress in 1938, the above resolution was somewhat modified. The Congress declared that it would federate only with States which enjoyed "the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India", but the burden of carrying on the struggle for freedom must fall on the people of the States. But individual Congressmen were given freedom to render assistance in their personal capa-

[15] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1937, Vol. II, pp. 361-2.

cities. The State Congress committees were required to submit to the control of the Congress Working Committee.

The Mysore incident was followed by disturbances in Hyderabad, Travancore, Kashmir and other smaller states during the year 1938. These invited a fresh revision of the policy of non-intervention by the organisation while permitting individuals to give assistance. Gandhiji called upon the rulers to cultivate friendly relations with the Congress, otherwise it might change its policy. The All-India Congress Committee warned the Princes against the policy of repression with military help from the Government.

Nehru had been chafing at the mild and hesitant policy of the Congress towards the States. He maintained, "A more incompatible and absurd Union it is difficult to imagine between the autocracy of the States and the democracy of the rest of India."[16] In 1937 he had condemned the Princes as the close allies of British Imperialism.

On the 15th and 16th of February 1939, he presided over the Annual Conference of the All-India States' People. He recalled that the Haripura Congress had clearly laid down that the integrity and unity of India was essential, the same full measure of political, social and economic freedom, and the same full responsible government with the guarantee of civil rights should accrue to the States as to the rest of India. He pronounced the State governments as out of date and their treaties with the British rulers moth-eaten documents not binding on the people.

He declared that it was the right and privilege of the Congress to work for the attainment of the goals defined at Haripura. He said, "There was no question of non-intervention; the Congress, as representing the will of the Indian people, recognises no bars which limit its freedom of activity in any matter pertaining to India and her people."[17]

At this time difficult situations arose in a number of States, Rajkot being the worst. The Thakur of Rajkot and his Chief Minister Virawala were faced with their subjects' agitation for political and administrative reforms. The Prince responded with repression. People were inflamed and their agitation became stormy. Then Patel intervened and a compromise was effected between the Thakur and his subjects. It was conceded by the Prince that a Committee would be appointed to consider the reforms, and that seven members of the Committee would be appointed by the Thakur on the nomination of Patel. Later he repudiated the agreement and the affair assumed a dangerous hue. At this stage Gandhiji came upon the scene, and he tried to persuade the Thakur to honour his pledge. But he failed.

[16] Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography* (1953), p. 534.

[17] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. I, pp. 437-8.

His fast, the intervention of the arbitrator—the Chief Justice of India, and all Gandhiji's efforts proved futile. Gandhiji had to accept defeat. But he did not know why the Thakur proved so adamant.

The reason was that the Government of India was interested in the case. It looked upon the Congress intervention as a challenge and did not want the Congress to succeed in Rajkot, for that would amount to the substitution of the Congress in place of the Paramount Power. One success would lead to another and the authority of the Government of India would fade away.

Linlithgow wrote to the Secretary of State : "It was of vital importance that State (Rajkot) should not allow itself to be rushed and that while ensuring that any action necessary to remedy shortcomings and grievances was taken, it should resist any endeavour on the part of the Congress to come in as arbitrators or the like. I told him that on that basis they can look for full support from me. ...... I have little doubt that if Congress were to win in Rajkot case the movement would go right through Kathiawar and that they would then extend their activities in other directions."[18]

The Congress watched with deep concern the developments which were taking place all over India in small as well as large States. In a number of them the people had established State congresses and they were seeking some kind of affiliation with the Indian National Congress. The smaller States which drew attention for the oppressive activities of their Durbars were scattered about in Orissa, Rajputana, Kathiawad. The larger States had hit upon a new tactic. They identified their subjects' movements with communal dissensions.

However the Congress maintained, on the whole, its policy of non-interference. But it allowed the State Congress Committees to be affiliated to the Working Committees of the provinces. It also supported the demand of the State subjects for transfer of responsibility and the enforcement of civil liberties and upheld its right to protect the State people, though it refrained from resort to actual measures of protection.

IV. League Declares War on Congress

The second limb of the British policy of negating advance towards responsible government was the veto of the Muslim League. Doubtless this was the more powerful weapon. The opposition of the Muslims to the demand of the Congress had been incited and mani-

[18] *Private Office Papers of S.S.* : The Viceroy to the Secretary of State, November 26, 1938.

pulated by the Government since the early days of the Congress. By 1935 the opposition had passed through two stages of evolution. During the first stage the Muslim leaders—especially of the Aligarh school, still thought of India as one nation, but they stressed the multi-religious and multi-cultural composition of the Indian nation and demanded the recognition of this diversity in legislative and administrative institutions.

The Khilafat movement inaugurated the second stage when the Muslims began to be conscious of their dual loyalty—one to the world brotherhood of Islam, and the other to India. The emphasis now changed from cultural and religious aspects of the demand to political matters, from the problems of language, ritual and ceremonial to the question of sharing power. So far the provincial and local issues were matters of contention between the minority and the majority communities, now the stress shifted to the central government—the real seat of authority.

At this stage Jinnah emerged as the leader of the new ideology. It has been mentioned before that from December 1931 to October 1934, Jinnah disappointed with Indian politicians and despairing of India's future seriously thought of settling down in England. This was a period of lively developments in England. The Indian problem was the subject of vehement discussion. The Aga Khan headed the Muslim school of separatist politics. In his letters to the *Times* (London) "the Aga Khan had already fulminated against the Nehru Report's unitary system. He favoured the recasting of provincial boundaries on racial, cultural and linguistic lines and an eventual federation of free states."[19]

About this time Chowdhry Rahmat Ali, a student of the Emmanuel College, Cambridge, started the movement for a national Muslim state in India independent of Hindu India. This proposal was considered by the Joint Parliamentary Committee during the session 1932-33. The Muslim witnesses like Zafrullah Khan and others dismissed it as puerile and chimerical. But it is significant that the scheme was considered worthy of attention by the Joint Parliamentary Committee. It must have drawn the attention of Jinnah, especially because a similar plan was advocated by Iqbal in 1930, who had demanded "the formation of a consolidated Muslim state". Durga Das reports a conversation with Fazli Husain which throws considerable light on the plan for Pakistan. According to Fazli Husain, "those who fathered the idea in the early thirties had been financed by British intelligence in London."[20]

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[19] Philips and Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[20] Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*, p. 169.

Others too were thinking along these lines. The air was thus thick with solutions of the Muslim communal problem. Apparently Jinnah had not taken a decision on the question when he returned to India. But the idea that the Muslims of India were not merely a community but a nationality was growing in him. His speeches from 1935 to 1937 and attempts at Hindu-Muslim settlement show the conflict which then existed in his mind.

Early in 1935 he entered into negotiations with Rajendra Prasad the then President of the Congress. "A curious mixture of earnestness and suspicion characterised the negotiations in Delhi to bring about a settlement of the communal problem", observes the biographer of Jinnah.[21] Yet the two agreed upon the terms of the settlement, but they had to obtain the validation of their respective organisations. Then a hitch occurred. Jinnah demanded not only the consent of the Congress but also of the Hindu Mahasabha, and secondly, the recognition of the Muslim League as the sole representative organisation of the Muslims.

Rajendra Prasad naturally informed him that he could not possibly give a guarantee for the agreement of the Mahasabha, which had its own legislative party and had fought the elections of 1934 in disregard of the Congress. Yet the Hindu Sabha of the Punjab was agreeable, and he promised to persuade the Mahasabha. Asaf Ali pointed out to Jinnah that the claim of the Muslim League was not sustainable in view of the existence of a number of other independent Muslim groups, e.g., the All-India Muslim Conference with the Aga Khan as its patron, the Khilafatists, the Ulama, the Ahrars, the Qadianis and so forth.

In these discussions the new Jinnah revealed himself. The three main strands of his attitude were (1) acceptance of the Congress aim of full independence for India, (2) assertion that the Muslim League was the one and only political organ of the Muslim community, and (3) denial of the claim of the Congress that it represented the Indian people irrespective of race, creed or culture, and adoption of the British theory that the Congress was a Hindu body.

A few weeks later he was informing a Muslim students' gathering in Bombay how difficult the situation of the Muslim community was, displeasure of the Government on the one side, the antagonism of the Hindu Mahasabha and the doubts of the Congress on the other. He asked "When this great country gets self-government, are we to be under the rule of the Hindus?" and he assured them that the Muslims were not going to allow anyone to achieve supremacy and ascendancy.[22]

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[21] Saiyid, M. H., *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, pp. 519-20

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 526

After a sojourn of six months (23rd April to 24th October) in England Jinnah returned. The Government of India Act of 1935 had been passed by then. The Muslim community was without a leader of all-India fame. Jinnah was the only prominent Muslim who could supply the need. He represented the liberal, modernist, intellectual middle class among the Muslims as contrasted with the conservative propertied upper class. He rallied these middle class intellectuals under the banner of the Muslim League and infused a new spirit in the moribund organisation. He gave new slogans to the community—protection of 'the integrity of Islam', 'equality in political power' with the Hindus, 'full national independence'.

His prestige rose high. His first success was to induce the Jamiat-ul-Ulama to join the Muslim League Parliamentary Board. He addressed in April 1936 at Delhi the Delhi Ulama Conference and told them that "the eighty million Muslims of India are willing and even more anxious than any other community to fight for the freedom of the mother India." This was exactly what the Ulama had been striving for. Not only did Jinnah give them assurance about the aim of the League, but promised to remove from the League the reactionary upper class elements and appoint on the Parliamentary Board a majority of representatives of Jamiat-ul-Ulama.

At the conference he explained that the problem was not religious, but was a purely political problem and the Muslims wanted safeguards for their rights in the constitution, as power and authority were likely to intoxicate people. He exhorted them to "organise yourselves and play your part."[23]

In Bombay the Muslim League held after a number of years its session. Jinnah in controverting Jawaharlal's theory asserted that there were four parties in India—the Indian Princes, the Hindus, the Muslims and the British Government. He declared the Muslims had the same object as the Hindus and were ready as any Hindu nationalist to stand by the country and struggle for its freedom. But he reminded them that for the first time a constitution was being tried by which the Government was to be carried on by majority rule, and the Muslims were a minority community. In order to inspire confidence in the Muslims political safeguards were necessary.[24]

The League set up the machinery to fight the elections of 1937. What happened at the elections in the different provinces of India, how the League fared in them, and how the hopes of the League to share power in the new governments with the Congress were dashed to the ground have been related in previous pages. The Congress has been blamed and not without reason for the part it played, unmindful of

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 537-38.

the consequences. But Jinnah's conditions for cooperation were impossible as Rajendra Prasad had found in 1935. And in any case the reaction of Jinnah and the Muslim community exceeded all limits. It was imprudent, nay reckless, for instead of establishing harmony it perpetuated Hindu-Muslim antipathy and as later events proved, threw into jeopardy the welfare of the Muslim community itself along with that of the Hindus.

When the elections of the Provincial legislatures were over, Jinnah found to his dismay that the League was able to win only 109 seats out of 485 allotted to the Muslims. Another shock was in store for him. Jinnah was anxious to admit in the League the Muslim members elected on the ticket of the Agriculturist Parties and the independents. in spite of the fact that they had been returned after opposing the League candidates. The Jamiat members of the Parliamentary Board protested and reminded Jinnah of his promise to exclude the reactionaries from the League. The behaviour of the other members of the League, e.g., that of Raja of Salempur, President U.P. branch of the League, who accepted the ministry in the transitory government of U.P., pained them. But above all Jinnah's arrogant attitude towards the Ulama outraged their sense of self-respect, and they resigned from the Parliamentary Board of the League.[25] The Ahrars followed.

Jinnah was on the horns of a dilemma. He wanted to gain the cooperation of the Congress so that the League might share power and gain prestige, but he was reluctant to modify the conditions on which he would cooperate. Then, if he compromised he would lose his credit with the community, especially the vociferous section which insisted upon the safeguards guaranteed by MacDonald's Communal Award.

Therefore, on the one hand, he parleyed with the Congress, on the other, worked for Muslim solidarity.

In pursuance of the dual policy a meeting of the League was held at Lucknow from 13th to 15th October 1937. This was attended besides the regular members of the League by the Premiers of the Panjab and Bengal. In his presidential speech Jinnah chided the Congress for saying one thing and doing quite another and blamed it for the loss of Muslim interest in the Congress. He condemned the Congress governments for the enforcement of Hindi language, *Bande Mataram* song and the Congress flag; and thus demonstrating that Hindustan was for the Hindus alone. At the same time he reproached

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 544-45.

[25] S. Husain Ahmad Madni's statement published in the *Qaid* of Moradabad and the "*Madina*" in the month of Dhi Qaad 1357 A. H. and in pamphlet form from the office of the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, Delhi.

the British Government for failure to use the powers and special responsibility to safeguard and protect the minorities and thus incurring the blame for the disastrous consequences.[26]

He told the League, "No settlement with the majority community is possible, as no Hindu leader speaking with any authority shows any concern or genuine desire for it. Honourable settlement can only be achieved between equals, and unless the two parties learn to respect and fear each other there is no solid ground for any settlement."[27]

His conclusion was, "Politics means power and not relying only on cries of justice or fair play or goodwill."[28]

He appealed to the Musalmans of India in every province, every district, every tahsil and every town to devise ways and means of social, economic and political uplift of the Musalmans. Said he, "I entreat and implore that every man, woman and child should rally round one common platform and flag of the All-India Muslim League."[29] According to his biographer, Jinnah's address "is a document of very great importance in as much as it is a declaration of a new faith ushering in an era of great activity for the League and Musalmans. It marks the final clash with the Congress and envisages a complete break from its policy and programmes."[30]

It was about this time that the following dialogue took place between Thompson and Jinnah:

Thompson enquired, "Two nations, Mr. Jinnah : confronting each other in every province? every town? every village?"

Jinnah replied, "Two nations, confronting each other in every province, every town, every village. That is the only solution."

Thompson, "That is a very terrible solution, Mr. Jinnah ?" "It is a terrible solution. But it is the only one."[31]

The adhesion of Sikandar Hayat Khan, with the proviso that the Unionist Party would not be interfered with in the Panjab, of Fazlul Haq of Bengal, and later of M. Saadullah of Assam greatly enhanced the influence and prestige of the Muslim League and its leader Jinnah. The immediate effects were that the Muslim League won the bye-elections held in Uttar Pradesh, enrolled about a lac of members, organised 90 branches of the League in U.P. and 40 in the Panjab. The urban Muslims joined the League in numbers because of their

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[26] Jinnah, M. A., Presidential Address delivered at the Lucknow Session of the All-India Muslims League, October 13, 1937. Jamiluddin Ahmad, (ed.). *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, Vol. I, pp. 31-32.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[30] Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, p. 594.

[31] Thompson, E., *Enlist India for Freedom*, p. 52.

interest in services and the village Mullahs supported the League as it stood against the secularism of the Congress. The Panjab Muslims who were at one time against the League, turned to it, as a result of the Hindu opposition in the Provincial legislature to such measures as the Restitution of the Mortgaged Lands Act, the Registration of the Money-lenders Act, and the Relief of Indebtedness Act, which mainly benefited the Muslim small zamindars and peasants. In Bengal Jinnah succeeded in bringing about a compromise between the Krishak Praja and the Provincial Muslim Parliamentary Board.

The Congress did not neglect the challenge. The Congress Working Committee at its meeting from the 26th October to 1st November 1937, passed a resolution on minority rights. While laying emphasis on the objective of the Congress viz., independence and unity of India, it affirmed that no class or group would exploit another to its advantage, and it reiterated the fundamental rights—freedom of expression, association, conscience, residence and movement, protection of culture, language and script, equality before the law, equality of opportunity in employment and occupation, universal adult franchise and neutrality of the state in religion.

It condemned the communal award, but declared that a change could only be effected by the mutual consent of the communities. It expressed its wishes to proceed in matters relating to the minorities with their cooperation and goodwill. It issued a statement to meet the complaint about the *Bande Mataram* song.

Jawaharlal called upon the Congress to take up energetically the mass contact movement which would aim at the strengthening of the Congress, and attracting the growing consciousness and ferment among the masses—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.

Jinnah gave a warning to the Congress that interference with Muslim affairs would mean complete disaster.[32]

Nehru then addressed to Jinnah a letter on February 4, asking for confirmation of the points of difference and agreement, and inviting him to a talk. Jinnah expressed his surprise at Nehru's ignorance of these points and sent him papers dealing with Hindu-Muslim differences. Then long letters passed between them till April 18, 1938, when the correspondence ceased without clearing up the issues.

Meanwhile Jinnah and Gandhi had started writing to each other. On October 19, 1937, immediately after the League meeting at Lucknow, Gandhiji wrote to Jinnah that he regarded his Presidential speech as "a declaration of war". Jinnah replied that the speech was

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[32] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 359-76; and Peerzada, Syed Shamsuddin, *Leaders' Correspondence with Mr. Jinnah;* also Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, p. 558.

"purely in self-defence". The correspondence was resumed in February 1938, when Jinnah complained to Azad about Gandhiji's silence. This led to an exchange of a number of letters. At last Jinnah repeated his conditions for meeting Gandhiji, "You recognise the All-India Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organisation of the Musalmans in India, and on the other hand you represent the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country. It is only on that basis that we can proceed further and devise a machinery for approach."[33]

In writing this dictatorial letter, Jinnah not only assumed for himself a position to which the Congress could not subscribe, but also directed Gandhiji to assume the role of the sole representative of all the Hindus of India, and accept his judgement that the Congress was a Hindu organisation. Obviously, Gandhiji could not admit such claims, but agreed to see Jinnah. After the preliminary sparring they met on April 28, 1938, at Jinnah's residence in Bombay. The only result was the cryptic statement, "We had three hours of friendly conversation over Hindu-Muslim question. The matter will be pursued further."[34]

The last of this series of encounters was the interview between Jinnah and Subhas Bose and the subsequent exchange of letters from August 20, 1938 to October 12, 1938. This time also they drew a blank. Subhas Bose on the advice of the Working Committee wrote in December:

"The Working Committee have considered your letter of October 10, 1938 and regret the decision contained therein. Since the Committee do not find it possible to agree with the Council of the Muslim League as to the basis of the negotiations between the Congress and the League, the Working Committee regret that they are not in a position to do anything further in the direction of starting negotiations with the League with a view to arriving at a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question."[35]

This rung the curtain down on unity talks. The Congress refused to yield to Jinnah's overbearing demand to renounce the ideals which it had cherished since it was born, nor could it be hectored into giving recognition to the Muslim League's claim as the only authoritative representative of the entire Muslim people of India. It negotiated with Jinnah because it desired to carry with it in the struggle for independence all sections of Indians whether large or small, and also because it believed that the cooperation of the Muslim League which commanded the allegiance of a great number of Muslims was necessary in order to bring the struggle to a successful and speedy issue.

[33] Tendulkar, D. G., *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, p. 303.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 305.
[35] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. II, p. 302.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that by the time of the resolution of the Congress Working Committee, Jinnah's interest in unity had worn thin, and the counsels of men like Iqbal were succeeding in obtaining possession of his mind.

He was proud enough not to budge from his objective of independence, but the twin idea of unity was fast vanishing. Since he found it impossible to force the Congress to accept his terms, he turned to the old traditional policy of the original Muslim League, viz., to achieve the aims of the community with the help of the Government. But instead of begging and entreating for the favours of the Government, he bullied the Viceroy and blackmailed the Government by threats.

The Government steered by Zetland, Amery and Linlithgow was obliging. As usual they miscalculated the dimensions of the Indian situation. They were well content so long as the League was creating obstruction in the Congress path towards independence, and they looked upon the extreme demands of the League as merely bargaining counters, if not sheer bluff. And so they continued to be complacent. They argued if Montagu and Chelmsford could keep India quiet during the early nerve-racking stage of the First World War, why should not similar tactics help them to pass over the dangerous days of the Second War, which by now was knocking at the gate of India. Elementary considerations of prudence suggested that in the face of the crisis in Europe and the uncertainties of Indian politics, the old and tried friends of the Government should be kept in good humour, however distasteful or irksome it might be.

On October 8, 1938, Jinnah presiding over the Sind Muslim League Conference declared, "The High Command of the Congress has adopted a most brutal, oppressive and inimical attitude towards the All-India Muslim League since they secured the majority in the six provinces."[36]

After delivering his diatribe, he accused the Government again for entering into a secret understanding with the Congress not to use its powers to protect the rights of the minorities. He advised the Muslims to stand on their own inherent strength, build up their own fate and forge sanctions behind their decisions. In his concluding remarks Jinnah compared the Muslim majority territories with Sudetenland and said, "Sudetenland was a state created artificially from Germany, but the people never forgot that their land was not the Sudetenland which was made by foreigners. Hence fresh maps are being drawn up."[37] This was the little straw which indicated which way the Hitlerian wind was blowing in India.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 354.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 357.

In the last week of December Jinnah spoke at the annual meeting of the All-India Muslim League at Patna, repeated all the well-known charges against the Congress and the Congress governments in the provinces. What Jinnah as a constitutionalist had deprecated all his life and denounced when the Congress resorted to it, *viz.* direct action, was approved at this meeting. The resolution advocating direct action was moved by one Aziz Ahmad Khan of U.P., supported by Sikandar Hayat Khan, Premier of the Panjab, and Fazlul Haq of Bengal, and adopted unanimously.

If Jinnah's Lucknow address sounded the reveille, the resolution of the League at Patna blew the veritable blast of the trumpet of war, not against the British masters of India, but against the Indian National Congress. The war of violent deeds was preceded by turbulent attacks of abusive words. The League appointed a Committee with Muhammad Mehdi, Raja of Pirpur, as chairman to investigate Muslim complaints against the Congress governments and submit a report. After a one-sided enquiry the Report, which was published in December 1938, condemned the Hindus and the Congress governments on numerous counts, e.g. excluding Muslims from a share in the Government and in the services, introduction of the Wardha scheme of education, compelling them to show respect to the Congress flag and sing *Bande Mataram* song, etc. and more specially on extending the use of Hindi and the neglect of Urdu.

A worse indictment was published in Bihar in March 1939 known as the Shareef Report. It was followed in December 1939 by Fazlul Haq's pamphlet entitled, *Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule.* All these contained exaggerated accounts of some complaints, but mostly half-truths and untruths.

The Congress offered to have these complaints investigated by an independent impartial authority, but Jinnah peremptorily rejected the proposal. About the substance of the charges, Harry Haig and Erskine gave Congress ministries a clean bill of state and Linlithgow refused Jinnah's demand for enquiry.

But the League propagandists believed with Goebbels that the greater the lie the greater the chance of its acceptance. And so when the eight Congress ministries resigned on the issue of the declaration of war Jinnah fixed December 22 as "the day of deliverance and thanks-giving".

With the going of the Congress out of office a new phase in the struggle for independence began. But before dealing with its history it is necessary to refer to the internal conflicts in the Congress.

V. Congress Factionalism

On the question of acceptance of office Congressmen had been initially divided. One group supported by Gandhiji favoured acceptance, the other group led by Jawaharlal opposed. When in March 1937 Jawaharlal yielded, the group searched for a leader. Subhas Chandra Bose though young (born in 1897) had already achieved India-wide reputation. Since his entry into politics in 1921 under the fostering care of C.R. Das he had suffered many imprisonments and exile. But he was possessed of a highly resilient nature, he was independent of mind, and stubborn of will. It was not easy for him to swim with the current. He had disagreed with Gandhiji when in 1922 he staged the non-cooperation movement. Again in 1928 he differed from the Congress policy and its methods of resisting the Government. In 1933 he was in Vienna undergoing treatment when he heard of the withdrawal of mass civil disobedience by Gandhiji. He became extremely annoyed and felt very sore. He considered the decision as an abject surrender and in anger exclaimed, "Gandhi is an old, useless piece of furniture."[38] He agreed with Bismarck, "No real change in history has ever been achieved by discussion." "But the only alternative is war: What of it? India can well afford to bring a blood sacrifice for her liberation, 350 million miserable lives are waiting for deliverance."[39] In a joint statement which Vithalbhai Patel and he issued they expressed the opinion that Gandhiji had failed as a political leader and advocated a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle, with a new method, and under a new leadership.

In 1935, he expressed his political views in a book *The Indian Struggle,* written in exile and published in London, but it was proscribed in India. Next year in April he returned to India, to be immediately arrested on landing at Bombay. He was interned in his brother's house in Calcutta, but was later released.

Bose was a born rebel and emotionally a dissenter. He believed "the future of India lay with those radical and militant forces that will be able to undergo the sacrifice and suffering necessary for winning freedom."[40] Naturally he became the hero of the younger Congressmen, who believed in socialism and in aggressive methods. His popularity earned him the Presidentship of the Congress in 1938. It was, however. clear that there were deep differences between him and other Congressmen. Gandhiji who belonged to the group in favour of accepting office desired to instal him in the high office in the belief that the responsi-

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[38] Toye, Hugh. *The Springing Tiger,* p. 37

[39] *Ibid.,* p. 37

[40] *Ibid.,* p. 48

bilities of office would moderate his extremist ardour. He was thus selected to preside over the Congress of Haripura (Gujarat) on February 19, 1938.

But there was a lot of stir and turmoil in the minds during those days. A variety of ideas had spread among Congressmen. Some professed faith in the Gandhian ideology, in the ancient traditions and ideals of India, some were attracted by the new concepts of the West—socialism, communism, fascism; there were others who wished to combine eastern and western social ideals, and the conservatives who did not favour any radical transformation. There were differences also about the method, the use of violence or non-violence. The Congress ministries had employed force to quell disturbances and curb violence. Were they justified? Then there were criticisms regarding the achievements of the ministries, for obviously the basic problems still remained unsolved. Men were impatient. They were confused.

In these conditions Subhas Chandra Bose was chosen as the President of the Haripura (Gujarat) Congress, beginning on February 19, 1938. He declared his policy on the eve of the session in these words: "My term of office as the Congress President will be devoted to resist the unwanted federal scheme with all its undemocratic and anti-national features, with all the peaceful and legitimate powers, including non-violent non-cooperation if necessary, and to strengthen the country's determination to resist this scheme."[41]

In his presidential address he laid special stress upon national planning, unity, and organisation of the masses for the national struggle. He also drew attention to the menacing situation in Europe, and specially the dangers threatening the British Empire, which created a new situation for India.

During his year of office he organised the National Planning Committee of which Jawaharlal Nehru was made Chairman. His policy of large-scale industrialisation and stiffening of opposition against compromise with Britain "caused annoyance in Gandhian circles who were then looking forward to an understanding with the British Government."[42]

It is true that at this time, attempts were being made to come to a settlement with the Government concerning the early establishment of the Federal Union. Gandhiji met Linlithgow on April 16, 1938, and told him that "he attached utmost importance to the formula which he had indicated to Lothian. Acceptance of it, he regarded as the real test whether or not we were denying India complete sovereignty. I got

[41] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 73.
[42] Bose, S. C., *The Indian Struggle*, 1920-42, p. 331.

the impression that he would accept federation, if some larger states introduced principle of popular choice."[43]

After the Munich Pact in September 1938, Bose began "an open propaganda, throughout India in order to prepare the Indian people for a national struggle which should synchronise with the coming war in Europe."[44]

This completed the breach between him and the Gandhian wing of the Congress. The result was a fight between the two for the election of the President of the next Congress session. The election took place in January 1939. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was the candidate of the one side and Subhas Bose of the opposite side. Surprisingly the Gandhian candidate suffered defeat and Subhas Bose was reelected.

In the meeting of the Congress at Tripuri (Maha Koshal) which took place on March 10, 1939, he urged that the Indian National Congress should immediately send an ultimatum to the British Government demanding independence within six months and should simultaneously prepare for a national struggle. But the suggestion was given short shrift. There were uproarious scenes in the meetings of the All-India Congress Committee and the Subjects Committee. Speakers were heckled and shouted down. Jawaharlal received a lot of barracking from the delegates. In the open session the following resolution was adopted:

"The Congress declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies of the Congress which have governed its programme in the past twenty years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, and is definitely of the opinion that there should be no break in these policies, and that these should continue to govern the Congress programme in the future...In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during a crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the Executive Authority of the Congress should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate the Working Committee for the ensuing year in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji."[45]

This was a clear notice to the President that it was not possible for him to act independently of Gandhiji and party. The delegates who had elected him to the office had apparently repented for causing displeasure to Gandhiji and therefore by an overwhelming vote reconfirmed their confidence in Gandhiji's leadership.

This created a deadlock which could not be resolved by negotiation

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[43] *Private Office Papers of S. S.*' The Viceroy to the Secretary of State, April 16, 1938.

[44] Bose, S. C., *op. cit.*, p. 332.

[45] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 332.

between Subhas Bose and Gandhiji and his adherents. Bose commented: "The negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi and the writer (Bose) revealed that on the one side, the Gandhi wing would not follow the lead of the writer and that, on the other, the writer would not agree to be a puppet President. There was, consequently, no other alternative but to resign the Presidentship."[46]

On April 29, 1939, Subhas Bose resigned and organised a new party, the Forward Bloc, in order to give a better fight to the Gandhian wing afterwards, and in any major crisis to be able to act on its own. The All India Congress Committee filled the vacant post by electing Rajendra Prasad as the President of the AICC for the year. He appointed the Working Committee in terms of the Tripuri Congress resolution. The exit of Subhas Bose was unfortunate as a grave crisis soon overtook the world and unity in the Congress ranks was a necessity.

[46] Bose, S. C., *op. cit.*, p. 333.

CHAPTER SIX

INDIA AND THE WAR

I. The Coming of War

The experiment of working the provincial part of the Constitution of 1935, was hardly twenty-seven months old. The Congress Ministries were gaining experience and self-confidence in provincial administration and the people were looking forward to the establishment of the Federal Union and the transfer of responsibility at the centre, when suddenly the dreaded but not unexpected catastrophe of war struck the world, threw every scheme into the arms of uncertainty and indefinitely postponed all hopes of political progress in India.

Long before the Congress ministries had assumed office the war shadows had begun darkening the international horizon, because the Treaty of Versailles had given Europe an uneasy peace. On January 30, 1933, Hitler seized power in Germany. But the event caused little flutter in the capitals of Europe. The French politicians were quite confident that they could successfully deal with the fire-eating Hitler and the sabre-rattling Mussolini. Germany had been disarmed and powerless, Mussolini was looked on as a mere swaggerer.

In England the general election of 1931 marked the apogee of the Baldwin era. Ramsay MacDonald, the puppet Prime Minister, was fast declining in mental vigour and intellectual grasp. Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State, was ploughing the barren sands of constitution-making for India, with Simon of the Statutory Commission fame at his elbow as Foreign Secretary. Churchill in the Conservative Party, but outside the ruling group, was prophesying the approaching doom of the Empire.

During the period of four years of the first National Government from August 1931 to June 1935—"the locust years", while there was feebleness, lack of direction, and muddle in British politics, Europe was fast changing. But British statesmanship seemed indifferent to the challenge.

It was not only in relation to India that the British statesmen exhibited ignorance of the realities of the situation and a dogged persistence in pursuing courses which by every sign portended disaster; the same heedlessness and lack of foresight was demonstrated in dealing with the rapidly developing situation in Europe. So while the French and the British talked of peace, disarmament, and security through the League of Nations, or bragged of crushing the intransigence of Italy and Germany through economic sanctions, Hitler and Mussolini follow-

ed their aims regardless of the International Organisation, fortified by the irresoluteness of their opponents.

Since the seizure of power in 1933, Hitler had made rapid strides in rearming Germany and rebuilding power. In January 1935 a plebiscite gave back to him Saar. In March he repudiated the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles on the disarming of Germany, and proclaimed compulsory military service. In October Mussolini invaded and occupied Abyssinia.

In 1935 Hitler secured Britain's consent to rebuild the German fleet up to a maximum of 35 per cent of the British tonnage. In March 1936 he remilitarized the Rhineland and in July rendered substantial assistance to General Franco in the Spanish Civil War, while England remained neutral.

During these gross violations of the Treaty of Versailles and defiant moves by Hitler, England supinely kept searching for peace and security. In the words of the *Annual Register* its policy in 1936, "was hesitant, indecisive, apologetic, content to drift."

Whether the policy was the result of the late awakening of the consciousness of the iniquity of the Versailles Treaty, or inability to read the lesson of plain facts induced by the national mood of pacifism, or unwillingness to incur the sacrifies which a war involved, or because Britain entertained anti-French feelings and doubted French support in case of war, the fact remains that because of its hesitations and policy of appeasement its military preparedness tarried behind and Hitler was encouraged to follow the adventurist policy which led to war.

When Baldwin due to illness retired in May 1937 and Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister, Europe had arrived almost at the edge of the precipice. Hitler was seeking the solution of the need for '*lebensraum*' (living space) for Germany. In February 1938 he initiated steps for bringing about the *Anschluss* (Union) of Austria. Success in Austria led to the realization of the dream of uniting all Germans under one state. The northern fringe of Czechoslovakia was inhabited by Germans and was known as Sudetanland. The German Party in Czechoslovakia inspired by the German Government claimed: "We want to return to the Reich". A grave crisis ensued. Chamberlain in order to avoid war went to Munich (September 29-30, 1938) to settle the Sudetanland problem. The settlement was a betrayal of Czechoslovakia, and a complete surrender to Hitler. War was merely postponed, not prevented. On March 15, 1939, the German army moved into Czechoslovakia. The Czech Government capitulated and the Republic ceased to exist.

These rude shocks which followed one another in quick succession at last overthrew the British complacency. The foreign policy was refurnished, frantic efforts were made to construct a security system.

France was given assurances of unlimited military aid and Poland all-out support if its independence was threatened. Russia was approached to join the security system, though a short while before it had been excluded from the concert of the four Powers—Britain, France, Italy and Germany, which Italy had arranged. Naturally Russia was not sure of Britain's intentions. Britain also suspected the good faith of Russia. The negotiations failed.

With desperate haste a huge programme of rearmament in the air and on the sea and land was launched. Military conscription was introduced.

In August a Nazi coup in Danzig led to its incorporation in Germany. Hitler, then, in order to neutralize Russia, entered into a non-aggression pact with Stalin giving his consent to the establishment of Russian sphere of influence over the Baltic states. The bugle of alarm was sounded. On September 1, the German forces crossed the Polish frontier. On September 3, Chamberlain announced in Parliament that England was at war with Germany.

II. India's Attitude to the Conflict

The prologue to the war had much to do in moulding the attitude of the Congress leaders towards the combatants. Their sympathies were undoubtedly in favour of Britain and its allies. They did not wish Britain to lose. For they held in high regard the British democratic and parliamentary institutions, and admired British culture—literature, philosophy, science, manners and mores, industry. They looked upon the Nazis and the Fascists as the enemies of freedom and progress. The rape of Abyssinia by Mussolini, the unscrupulous aid to Franco against the Spanish freedom fighters, the immoral theories of race superiority, world domination, and colonialism, the shameless flouting of the basic principles of international relations, the treacherous breaches of solemn pledges and treaties by Hitler and Mussolini were revolting to the Indian mind.

However, although Indians were prejudiced in favour of Britain and the allies, they were much perturbed by the conduct of the British statesmen. Their behaviour raised grave doubts in their minds. They had acted as unprincipled, indecisive men whose words and professions could not be trusted and whose competence to meet the challenge of the dictators was doubtful. Above all their dealings with India during the years immediately preceding the declaration of war had produced a wholly adverse impression. They had treated India with contempt, committed deeds of ruthless repression, opposed India's aspirations for freedom by means which exhibited shortsightedness, cruelty, indiffe-

rence to suffering, and unscrupulousness. Their deep hostility towards the Congress and assumption of superior airs caused general resentment and bitterness.

The upshot was that while, on the one hand, India desired no harm to the people of Britain, on the other, it longed for the dissolution of the British empire. Before the war actually broke out on September 3, 1939, the Indian National Congress had clearly warned the Government what its attitude would be.

For instance in April 1936 Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the Congress spoke of "the world filled with rumours and alarms of war," and affirmed that "India would not be a passive tool of imperialist aggression." The Congress adopted a resolution on the war danger.

In September the Congress was represented at the Brussels Peace Conference by Krishna Menon and gave a pledge of peace. The Fascist revolt against the Spanish Republican Government drew the attention of the Congress which condemned this war of despotism against freedom. The President of the Congress at Faizpur in December expressed India's indignation against Italy for invading Abyssinia, against Britain for the Anglo-German naval treaty which forced France into friendship with Fascist Italy and denounced British foreign policy which gave support to the dictators.

Later when in 1937 the Indian Government sent troops to China the Congress took strong objection for doing so without India's consent. It passed a resolution censuring Japan for invading the Chinese territory. The Government was told that India would not tolerate the exploitation of India's manpower and resources for imperialist purposes. India would resist attempts to involve the country in their pursuit.

At the Haripura Congress, February 1938, Subhas Chandra Bose, the President, referred to the involvement of Britain in many troubles in Ireland, Egypt, Iraq and within the Empire and in Germany, Italy and Japan outside. He concluded with the remark, "the clay feet of a gigantic empire now stand exposed as they have never been before."[1]

In June and July 1938 Jawaharlal visited Egypt, Spain, France and England, and on return warned the country of the nearness of war.

At the Tripuri Congress, March 1939, India dissociated itself from British policy. The All-India Congress Committee resolved upon resisting the imposition of war on India, and cautioned the Provincial Governments against the acceptance of the dictatorship of the Centre.[2] The Congress observed April 23 as the anti-war day.

[1] *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose* (Publications Division, 1962), p. 75

[2] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 351.

On August 9, the Congress Working Committee gave its considered opinion on the war situation. It assured the people who stood for democracy and freedom of its full support. It expressed its total disapproval of the fascist rulers and protested against the exploitation of India for imperial ends. The All India Congress Committee directed the Congress ministers to give no assistance in preparations for war.[8]

With the start of the war India's solicitude for its future and its sense of urgency became acute. As the war proceeded, it became sharper. The Congress demand grew more peremptory as the fortunes of war fluctuated. It is, therefore, necessary to keep in mind very briefly the progress of the war.

III. Course of the War

The war which was begun by Hitler on September 1, 1939, by invading Poland, extended over six years till September 1945. Its course may be divided into three stages.

During the first stage—September 1939 to April 9, 1940, from the German invasion of Poland to the German invasion of Norway and Denmark on April 9, 1940, "the twilight" or "phoney" war was waged in the secondary war theatres of Europe. From the 9th April, 1940 to December 1942 the war acquired a tremendous momentum. It became a medley of world shaking events following in rapid succession—(1) the battle of Scandinavia (April 1940), (2) the battle of the Netherlands (May 10 to 28, 1940), (3) the battle of France (June 5 to June 25), (4) the battle of Britain (July 10 to September 17, 1940), (5) the battle of the Atlantic (September 1939 to December 1942); opening of war against Russia (from 1941).

The third stage was ushered in by the turning of the tide in the Western theatre about the end of 1942, when the German military machine began to yield before the growing superiority of American and British war measures in the battle of the Atlantic. The battle of Russia was first brought to a standstill and was followed by the retreat and rout of German arms (December 1942 to March 9, 1945). The Italo-German offensive in North Africa was defeated by May 13, 1943. The Pacific War which the Japanese had opened on 7th December, 1941 with brilliant victories, began to turn against them early in 1944, and ended on September 2, 1945, after the atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945), when the Japanese signed the instrument of unconditional surrender.

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[8] Quoted by Tendulkar, D. G., in *Mahatma*, Vol. V (1969 ed.) p. 156.

IV. Government's Preparation to Crush Congress

The Viceroy and the Secretary of State were already discussing their line of action in anticipation of the war. Linlithgow had proposed that the formation of the Federation should be postponed and it should be used as an excuse for refusing any immediate constitutional change. He was encouraged in this view because the Governor of Bombay assured him that the Congress ministers wanted to continue in office and a similar assurance was given by the Governor of Madras. But the ministers expected the Viceroy to meet Gandhiji and secure his support.[4]

The war opened, and Zetland in the House of Lords and Linlithgow in Delhi made statements. The Viceroy announced that a grave emergency had come into existence whereby the security of India was threatened. Trading with enemy firms was declared an offence and Ordinances for ensuring public safety and defence of India were promulgated. Other measures were soon taken.

At his invitation Gandhiji met Linlithgow on September 5. He informed the Viceroy that he could not commit the Congress, but as a devotee of non-violence, condemned the action of Hitler. In fact he had already sent a letter to Hitler to dissuade him from resort to violence and war.

A day before Gandhiji's interview, however, India had been declared a belligerent; and although the Secretary of State had told the Viceroy that the responsibilities and difficulties of the Government of India were shared by the Provincial Governments, no consultation was held either with them or with the High Command.[5]

The Government had been forewarned by the Congress that a declaration of war on behalf of India without its consent would make for trouble. Forewarned the Government forearmed itself. The Governor-General addressed letters to the Provincial Governors on matters likely to arise in the situation when the ministers would resign and Section 93 of the Government of India Act would come into operation. They were invited to give their views regarding: (1) use of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 to declare organisations like the Provincial Congress Committees as unlawful, (2) initiating a "lightening war" or drastic action against a movement, (3) provision against sabotage, (4) adequacy of police force, and so on.[6]

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[4] *Private Office Papers of S. S* : Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State: Telegrams August 25, 1939, Nos. 1693-S and 1696-S; August 25, 1939, No. 1726-S.

[5] *Ibid*: The Secretary of State to the Viecroy, August 29, 1939, No. 527, Telegram Private and Personal.

[6] Home Department, Political Secret, Letter of H. E. the Governor-General addressed to all Governors, 11th October 1939, and summaries of their replies. Home Dept. Pol. I, File No. 3/11/40.

In another communication to the Provinces the Government of India directed the preparations required to strike against any organisation which intended to impede war effort.[7]

Another series of letters discussed the question of action to be taken against the Congress organisation in case of civil disobedience.[8] They suggested the employment of the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance and the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Then on August 2, 1940, a long communication was despatched by the Home Ministry of the Government of India to the Chief Secretaries of all Provincial Governments indicating how the Government proposed to ensure that no circumstances came into existence which might in any way impede the efficient prosecution of the war.[9] This was followed by a very secret letter pointing out specifically that "the situation primarily envisaged is still a clash with the Congress", when a stage would be reached at which, without waiting for an open declaration of war, it might be prudent for Government to take the offensive.[10]

Soon preparations were set on foot to wage a war against the Congress with all the means available—a lightning all-out war.

At the same time alternative avenues were explored to avert a clash—argument, appeal, and yielding to demands which involved no real transfer of power.

The Government agreed to make some meagre concessions to the Congress and Muslim League on the basis of the information gathered from secret sources, and their own estimate of what would meet the needs created by the changing war situation.

The policy of concession was announced on October 8, 1939, from Simla. It promised (1) the expansion of the Executive Council, (2) the establishment of a War Council to advise the Government, and (3) the setting up of a body to devise the framework of a constitution immediately on the termination of the war.

Finding the offer was unacceptable to the Congress, the Viceroy made on October 17, 1939 a further announcement, *viz.*, the readiness of the Government to take into consideration the revision of the Act of 1935 in consultation with representatives of Indian parties and interests immediately after the war.

These concessions were conceived in such a miserly spirit that

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[7] Home Department Political (I), File No. 3/13/40. Maxwell to P. S. Laithwaite, April 25, 1940.

[8] Home Department Political (I), File No. 3/11/40, May 6, 1940 to July 6, 1940.

[9] *Ibid.*, August 2, 1940.

[10] Home Dept. Pol. (I), File No. 6/13/40. Linlithgow G. G. to Governors of Bombay, Madras, Bengal, U.P., August 8, 1940, etc.

Wedgwood Benn in the House of Commons and Samuel Hoare in the House of Lords had no difficulty in tearing them to shreds.

The reaction of both the Congress and the Muslim League was expectedly adverse. Linlithgow, then, made a fresh effort to open negotiations. Early in November, he asked the Congress and the League to agree on proposals, (1) to reconstruct the provincial governments and (2) to join the executive in the Central Government. The talks failed because the Congress insisted upon the approval of the Government to the framing of the future constitution of India by a constituent assembly elected by Indians.

The Secretary of State was not impressed by the refusal of the Congress. On December 7, 1939, he declared that the Government found it impossible to accept the Congress demand on the plea that it had obligations which it could not shed or disregard.

On December 14, he asserted, "In their (Government's) view no constitution could be expected to function successfully, which did not meet with the general assent of the minorities, who had to live under it."[11] Then he indicated the reasons which led the Government to treat the Muslims not as a minority.

Linlithgow renewed his attempt to induce the Indian parties to cooperate, and with this aim he gave a speech on January 10, 1940, at the Orient Club, Bombay, which impressed Gandhiji as offering the prospect of agreement.

Jinnah who met the Viceroy on the 13th of January 1940 put forward his well known conditions for accepting the new scheme.

Gandhiji saw the Viceroy on February 5, but refused to agree to Jinnah's conditions and the attempt at settlement proved abortive.

V. Government's Assurances to the Muslim League

Since the assumption of office by the Congress ministries in July 1937, the Muslim League under Jinnah's lead had come to look upon the Congress as its enemy number one. He bent all his energies to defame the Congress and bring about its defeat. In 1938 the League appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Mahommed Mehdi of Pirpur to enquire into Muslim complaints against the Congress governments. The report which was published at the end of 1939 contained a fantastic indictment of Congress rule—of ill-treatment, injustice, oppression.

What was the truth? Harry Haig, the retired Governor of U.P., wrote in an article, "In dealing with communal issues the Ministers, in

[11] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. II, p. 418.

my judgment, normally acted with impartiality and a desire to do what was fair. Indeed, towards the end of their time they were being seriously criticized by the Hindu Mahasabha on the ground that they were not being fair to the Hindus."[12]

A similar opinion was expressed by Erskine, Governor of Madras. When Linlithgow was asked to appoint a commission of enquiry to investigate the Muslim charges under the chairmanship of Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he declined to do so, remarking that he had not received any report from any Governor on the matter. In this connection he wrote to the Secretary of State on December 12, 1939 :

"My own general impression is still that while specific instances may admit of being proved in a particular province, it would be most difficult for Jinnah to prove any general anti-Moslem action on the part of the Congress Governments. I do myself think that there has probably been a strong feeling of inferiority on Moslem side accompanied by an equally strong feeling of superiority on Hindu side in former Congress provinces which has produced a psychological condition of which full account must be taken."[13]

Francis Wylie, Governor of C.P. and Berar (1938-40), stated in a paper, "the accusations of gross anti-Muslim bias on the part of the Congress ministries were of course moonshine."[14]

Not the grievances but the experience of 1937-39 in forming the U.P. ministry shocked the Muslim League. Since 1935 Jinnah had tried to steer the League as close to the Congress political wind as possible, but to his chagrin he found his advances repulsed by the Congress leaders. Even the Governor on whom the Muslims relied for safeguarding their rights had proved a broken reed. The inference was inevitable; the Muslim claim to a share in Government depended upon the sweet will of the majority, *viz.*, the Hindus. The Muslim League must find a way out of what it considered a humiliating situation.

But whether the complaints were genuine or false or exaggerated, was beside the point. The regrettable fact was that the Muslim mind was being sedulously poisoned against the Congress and the Hindu community in general, so that the separatist tendencies were fast growing in volume and strength.

While Jinnah and other Muslim leaders had ridiculed the conception of Pakistan in 1933 in London, in 1938, the Provincial Muslim

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[12] *Asiatic Review*, July 1940, Cited in Coupland, R., *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Part II, p. 188.

[13] *Private Office of S.S.'s Papers*. The Viceroy to the Secretary of State, December 12, 1939, No. 143-S.C.

[14] Wylie, F., *Federal Negotiations in India*, 1935-39, *and After* (Philips & Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 523.)

League at Karachi with Jinnah as President considered the following resolution :

"This Sind Muslim League Conference considers it absolutely essential in the interests of abiding peace of the vast Indian continent and in the interests of unhampered cultural development, the economic and social betterment and political self-determination of the two nations, known as Hindus and Muslims, that India may be divided into two federations, *viz.* the federation of Muslim states and the federation of non-Muslim states."[15]

The resolution was, however, withdrawn.

What was the attitude of the Government on this matter? This was made clear by the correspondence between Jinnah and Linlithgow. Jinnah writing to the Viceroy on November 5, 1939, asked him to give a reply to the following points :

"That no declaration shall, either in principle or otherwise, be made or any constitution be enacted by His Majesty's Government or the Parliament without the approval and the consent of the two major communities of India, *viz.*, the Mussalmans and the Hindus."[16]

Linlithgow's reply dated December 23, 1939 read as follows :

"I can assure you that His Majesty's Government are not under any misapprehension as to the importance of the contentment of the Muslim community to the stability and success of any constitutional developments in India. You need therefore have no fear that the weight which your community's position in India necessarily gives their views will be understood."[17]

The statement of the Viceroy failed to satisfy the Muslim League Working Committee and Jinnah asked for clarification. The Viceroy obliged and in reply on April 19, 1940, he quoted the speech of the Secretary of State of April 18, in which he used these words :

"The undertaking given by His Majesty's Government to examine the constitutional field in consultation with representatives of all parties and interests in India connotes not dictation but negotiation . . . for I cannot believe that any government or Parliament in this country would attempt to impose by force upon, for example, 80 million Muslim subjects of His Majesty in India, a form of constitution under which they would not live peacefully and contentedly. This statement, I am sure you will agree, has removed any possible doubts on this point."[18]

In this connection it is interesting to note what Khaliquzzaman told

[15] Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims*, p. 265.

[16] Peerzada, Syed Sharifuddin, *Leaders' Correspondence with Mr. Jinnah*, p. 2.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Jinnah regarding his personal interview with Zetland on March 20, 1939 in London. In the conversation Zetland asked what was the alternative to the Act of 1935 and the Federal Union. Khaliquzzaman who had met Rahmat Ali and discussed with him the plan of Pakistan and accepted the principle of self-determination on which it was based immediately answered the query, "You may partition the Muslim areas from the rest of India and proceed with your scheme of federation of the Indian provinces without including the Muslim areas which should be independent from the rest."

Khaliquzzaman's impression was "that they (Zetland and his deputy) would not oppose the demand seriously."[19]

The impression was not baseless. Zetland's mind was increasingly tending towards accepting Muslim separatism. He wrote in his memoirs, "From this time onwards (his experience as the Governor of Bengal (1917-22), I could not resist a steadily growing conviction that the dominant factor in determining the future form of the Government of India would prove to be the All-India Muslim League."[20]

In December 1938 he wrote to Linlithgow : "If one thing is certain it is that the Muslims are uniting in their determination not to be dominated by the Hindus in any form of Central Government which may come into being."[21]

Jinnah after hearing Khaliquzzaman in Bombay assured him that he was not opposed to the suggestion, but it had to be examined in all its bearings.

As if these assurances were not enough, Zetland made two speeches in the House of Lords. On November 2, he outlined the proposal of the Government for the resolution of the communal differences and thereby made the situation worse. For he said, "Surely the path of wisdom in these circumstances is to invite leaders in the first instance of two main communities—Hindus as represented by the Congress, Moslems as represented by the All-India Moslem League—to meet under the auspices of a neutral and discuss their differences frankly and see whether they cannot find some solution thereto."[22]

In one sentence he had made three blunders : (1) to identify the Congress as a communal Hindu organisation, (2) to accept Jinnah's thesis that the Muslim League was the sole authoritative representative of the Muslim community, and (3) to give the two communities an equal status with a neutral to be judge and arbiter between them. As the neutral could be no other than the nominee of the British Govern-

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[19] Khaliquzzaman, C., *Pathway to Pakistan*, pp. 205 and 207-8. See also, *Essayez, the Memoirs of Lawrence, Second Marquess of Zetland*, p. 248.

[20] Cited in Philips & Wainwright *The Partition of India*, p. 83.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[22] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. II, p. 409.

ment, obviously Zetland wanted to keep the arbitrament in British hands.

Then he made a statement in the House of Lords on December 14 :

"We speak of Moslems as a minority, because on a purely arithmetical basis they are less in number than the Hindus. But they are a community of from eighty to ninety millions with race memories of days, when for 200 years the Moghul dynasty ruled over a greater part of the Indian sub-continent. They have behind them a tradition of military service, which persists to this day and is exemplified by the high proportion of the Indian army, which they fill."[23]

Nothing could be more fatuous than this reading of Indian history by the author of *The Heart of Aryavarta.*

To this absurdity another was added, one even more whopping. He said, "The fact remains that of the four hundred eighty-two Moslems elected to the lower chambers of the Provincial Legislatures at the last general elections only 26 stood as Congressmen."[24] In giving these statistics the aim evidently was to deceive the ignorant Lords. For the truth was that of 482 Moslem seats only 109 were won by the Muslim League.

Zetland's mind had not travelled beyond 1906, when Minto used the identical arguments in conceding the Muslim demand. From the spoken and written word of the Government spokesmen the Muslim League naturally drew the conclusion that they had been given the right of veto on all constitutional proposals. It was but human that the frustrated, vain and infuriated Jinnah should make the most of it.

The speeches of Zetland and Linlithgow confirmed Jinnah in his conviction that the Government would support him whatever his demand and opened the salvo of his batteries against the Congress with a proclamation. December 22 was to be observed by the Muslim League as a day of deliverance and thanksgiving. Then he sought further reassurance and strength from the spineless Governor-General by cajolery and threats. Jinnah made profound promises of Muslim aid in the war effort to a government already showing preference to it in recruitment. In frequent interviews with Linlithgow, Jinnah not only gained the backing for his plans and objectives, he fortified Government's resolve not to yield to the Congress demand for a Constituent Assembly to determine the constitution of India. He proposed that the British and not the Indian should have the final say in constitution-making. However deplorable this distrust of his own people and humiliating the dependence on alien masters, the fact cannot be ignored.

Fortified by British assurances Jinnah in his meeting with Linlithgow

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 418.

[24] *Ibid.*

on January 13, 1940, reiterated the conditions on which he would agree to the Government's proposals for administrative arrangements during the war, and for the reconsideration of the constitution after the war. The most important condition was that no constitutional arrangements, temporary or permanent, was acceptable which was not approved by the Muslim League.

The Ramgarh session of the Congress indicated the possibility of direct action and the contemplation of its consequences jolted the Muslim League into greater fear and hostility towards the Congress.

So, when the Muslim League met at Lahore on March 22, 1940, the stage was set for the firing of the final shot. Jinnah who presided recounted the usual complaints against the Congress and Gandhiji, and declared the plan of drafting a constitution by a Constituent Assembly as impracticable and unacceptable. The League then considered and passed the famous Pakistan resolution on March 24, 1940 in these terms :

"Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle *viz.*, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

"That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in the units and in the regions for the promotion of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them, and in other parts of India where the Musalmans are in a minority adequate, effective and mandatory safegaurds shall be specifically provided in the constitution for them and other minorities for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them."[25]

The Muslim League's claim to autonomy, even sovereign status, in the Muslim majority areas, could not be condemned as altogether unreasonable. In substance the claim of nationality was correct, but whether the natural aspirations and hopes of the sub-national group could be satisfied or not by remaining within the ambit of a larger political federal union, is debatable.

Even a more relevant criticism was whether the Pakistan envisaged in the Lahore resolution was viable and realizable.

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[25] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. I, p. 312.

What was utterly wrong and patently grotesque was the assertion that all the Muslim inhabitants of India from Peshawar to Cape Comorin and Kutch to Chittagong formed one nation, and all the non-Muslims residing in the sub-continent constituted a separate nation. It is amazing that not only the Muslims who were living in a world of fantasy, but also Englishmen belonging to a national society and knowing what nationality was, subscribed to this preposterous concept. But in their case, wish was father to the thought.

For the Congress leaders the unity of India was axiomatic. To question it was like denying the validity of the law of gravitation. Gandhiji was so shocked by the idea that he called partition 'vivisection', which assumed that India was a living organism and indivisible. Jawaharlal dismissed the idea as silly and gave it no more than 24 hours' life. Rajendra Prasad wrote a large-sized book to prove the non-viability of Pakistan.

They were mistaken in this. But they were wholly right in denouncing the theory that a nation could be constituted on the basis of religion—an idea which has little support in history, politics or social philosophy. The history of Islamic countries does not provide any proof of the theory. The Muslim states like the Ummayid and the Abbasid Caliphates were not national states. Nor were the medieval Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires in Turkey, Iran and India national states. According to Iqbal, Islam and nationalism were contradictory terms. The modern Muslim nation states like Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Iran and others have not been formed on the basis of Islamic religion or cannon law. They function under man-made laws. Most of them do not prescribe religious conformity as the condition of citizenship and all their citizens and subjects enjoy equal rights and undertake equal duties without discrimination based on religion, which is contrary to the *Shariat*, for it divides the people of a country into three classes—(1) the Muslim or faithful, (2) the *Dhimmis* or protected, the followers of the books other than the Quran, and (3) the *Kafirs* or non-believers. Nor do these modern nations show any real inclination to merge themselves into a common Islamic nationality.

Apparently the Muslim League began to apprehend the implications of Pakistan after they had demanded it in March 1940. For in the Madras session of the League in April 1941, Jinnah elaborated the concept of Pakistan in these words :

"We want to establish a completely independent state in the North-West and Eastern zones of India, with full control of finance, defence, foreign affairs, communications, customs, currency, exchange, etc. We do not want, under any circumstances, a constitution of All-India character, with one government at the centre."

The League then defined its creed in the terms of the Lahore resolution.

The interesting part of the resolution concerned the safeguards for the minority rights in Pakistan among which were included political and administrative rights. They could only mean reservation of seats in legislatures and cabinets and a share in the services. But when the same safeguards had been assured by the Congress they were regarded by the League as merely paper safeguards. If then the solemn promises and mandatory undertakings of the Congress were valueless, what guarantee was there that the same pledges emanating from the League would be binding ?

It was taken for granted that a separate nationality must find expression in a separate sovereign state. There is, however, no support for the idea in history, for there are numerous examples of two or more nationalities joining and forming one state. Canada is a single state with a population of about 14 million persons. The two principal nationalities constituting the state are the British (8 million) and the French (5.54 million). In religion the Roman Catholic church has 8.3 million followers, the United Church of Canada 3.7 million and the Anglican Church 2.4 million. English and French are the two state languages. The Czecho-Slovakian Republic consists of two Slav nations—the Czechs and Slovaks. Its total population of nearly 12 million is mainly divided into the Czechs 65.4 per cent and the Slovaks 28.5 per cent. Czech and Slovak spoken in the two regions are branches of the great family of the Slav languages. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is composed of several states—Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. The religious distribution of the population is as follows :

Orthodox (Christians of the Greek Church) 41.2 per cent, Roman Catholics 31.7 per cent, Muslims 12.3 per cent, Protestants 0.9 per cent, and those without any religion 12.6 per cent.

The Union of South Africa is composed of two nationalities—English and Dutch; Switzerland of three—German, French and Italian; the United Kingdom of Britain of the English, Highland Scots, Lowland Scots and Welsh.

But the most outstanding instance of a multinational state, of course, is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It consists of more than twenty nationalities, its children receive their education through the medium of numerous languages. Its people profess many religions—Christian and non-Christian, but none of them is a state religion.

Admitting then that there were two nationalities in India, it did not follow that India should be divided into two states. Even Iqbal, the author of the Pakistan Plan, talked of Muslim India within India. In 1935, Jinnah was still endeavouring to achieve unity, he was assur-

ing the Jamiat-ul-Ulama, "the eighty million Muslims of India are willing and even more anxious than any other community to fight for the freedom of the Motherland, hand in hand with other sister communities."[26] The next year, April 22, 1936, he was still telling the Muslims at the Muslim League Conference in Bombay, that the task of bending the British to their wishes "could be done only by the two major communities standing shoulder to shoulder and working together". Even so late as May 12, 1939, Jinnah had not committed himself to Pakistan, for when Khaliquzzaman pleaded with him that there was no other alternative open to the Muslims, he said "he was not opposed to it, but it had to be examined in all its bearings."[27] However, the result of the elections of 1937—the failure of the League candidates and the thumping victory of the Congress, so worked upon his nerves that he lost his balance. He bade adieu to the principles he had professed throughout his life and turned a complete somersault.

It has been suggested that Jinnah's transformation was due partly to his wounded pride and partly to his domestic tragedy. Jinnah was a thorough-going egotist, vain, over-bearing. and revengeful. He was defeated by Congress in his attempts to play the successful arbiter in the Hindu-Muslim quarrel and was balked of the credit of bringing India near the realization of self-government. The Muslims refused to follow his counsel at the Round Table Conference and preferred the advice of Fazli Husain, thus demonstrating their subservience to the British officialdom. All this hurt his *amour propre*. Then he was deprived of domestic happiness by the separation of his young wife and her premature death, for which he blamed himself.

Humiliated, disgusted and unhappy Jinnah took the resolve to seek compensation in the acquisition of power and in fashioning of sanctions to sustain it. So he came to the conclusion that appeals to patriotism, justice and fairplay and for goodwill fall flat; only power counts.

On the basis of these immoral Machiavellian principles he built up his strategy. Its elements were— (1) organise and strengthen the Muslim League to equal the Congress, (2) weaken the position of the opponents by drawing maximum advantage from their mistakes, (3) mislead the opponents and induce them to make mistakes and weaken themselves, and (4) avoid embroilment in a struggle which weakens the Muslims organisation.

It followed, "in politics one has to play one's game as on the chess board."[28]

Armed with his mental apparatus the new Jinnah entered upon his

[26] Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, p. 547.

[27] Khaliquzzaman, C., *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 211.

[28] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, "The Personality of Jinnah and his Political Strategy," in Philips and Wainwright, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

crusade against the Congress. The British rulers profited by the relentless war which Jinnah carried on against the Congress.

While giving profuse and categorical assurances to the minority community about constitutional advance, accepting the League's demand that no change—temporary or permanent, would be made in the Government of India; and promising that the entire scheme of the 1935 Act would be reopened after the war for discussion, amendments or rejection, it did not occur to the British politicians, solicitous of minority rights, that the majority, too, had rights. The majority was ignored, its withholding of consent to the League demands was considered unreasonable or indicative of Hindu lust for tyranny over the minority. The minority demand, however unreasonable and opposed to the general interests of the other Indian communities and even of a large section of the Indian Muslims, was approved.

The Government refused to listen to the opinion of the Congress, the Liberal Federation, the Non-Party Leaders' organisations, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikhs, the Christians, the Muslims of the North-West Frontier Province, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama, the Nationalist Muslims. And against the vast majority of Indians of different communities who disagreed with the claims and objectives of the Muslim League, it stuck to Jinnah and thereby enhanced his prestige and influence to dizzy heights among the Muslims who had unfortunately depended entirely upon the goodwill of Government in the past, who had considered it their duty and interest to carry out the wishes and conform to the policies of the officials, and who had not risen above their medieval penchant to follow the leader.

The adventitious circumstance that no Muslim leader of the same stature as Jinnah was then available helped to give him his unique position. The Provincial leaders like Sikandar Hayat Khan, Fazlul Haq, Saadullah Khan flourished under Government's benign favour and were told not to oppose Jinnah, who served their purpose.

The attitude of Government then, and not the plausibility and attractiveness of the concept of Pakistan, nor the loud claims of the Muslim League to be the self-appointed sole representative of the Indian Muslims, nor the exaggerated fears of 'Islam in danger' was responsible for the phenomenally rapid spread of Jinnah's popularity.

VI. Congress Demand for Definition of War Aims

The Working Committee met at Wardha from September 8 to 15, 1939, and after several days' deliberations resolved to withdraw the nationalist members of the Legislative Assembly, and issued the following statement :

"The British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken many other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments."[29]

The Committee declared that the Indian people refused to co-operate in the war so long as equality of status and freedom was withheld. It recalled how the spoken words and promises of the British statesmen had been denied and repudiated in the past; how in the First World War the pledges concerning annexation of territories, treatment of Turkey and political advance in India were disregarded; how President Wilson's fourteen points were ignored and a harsh treaty was imposed on Germany; how the League of Nations was muzzled and strangled: and lastly how in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia assurances given were belied.

Nevertheless the Committee deferred its final decision on the issue and invited the Government to define and clarify its war aims and especially proposals about India's future in unequivocal terms, for if the war was to be fought for the maintenance of the status quo India would have nothing to do with it.

The resolution of the Working Committee was interpreted by Government as the refusal of the Congress to cooperate in the war effort. Zetland characterized it as an attempt at bargaining. The Governor of Madras advised the Viceroy : "Personally I think we should not enter into any bargain, for if Congress do go out it will be their funeral, not ours."[30]

The Viceroy in a long despatch discussed three alternative ways of dealing with the Congress demand—total rejection, full agreement, or a middle course with a face-saving device. After arguing against the first two, he suggested the face-saving concession, *viz.*, the constitution of a Defence Liaison Committee of British Indian representatives and Princes for consultative purposes. He thought he could hold on during the war against the intransigence of the Congress without weakening British hold on India or making further constitutional advance "which may be regarded as prejudicial to our friends, the Princes and Moslems."[31]

[29] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. II, p. 226.

[30] *Private Officer Papers of S. S.* : The Viceroy to the Secretary of State, September 16, 1939, no. 1948-S.

[31] *Ibid.*, The Viceroy to the Secretary of State, September 21, 1939, Personal and Private Telegram, 2003-S.

The Secretary of State replied the next day : "The demands of Congress are incapable of fulfilment. It would be impossible to give any pledge of Dominion Status within a specified time, and even if it were possible, one result would be obviously to forfeit all Moslem support."[32]

After the Working Committee's meeting, Gandhiji met the Viceroy on September 24 and 26 to explain the stand of the Congress. About a week later Rajendra Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru saw the Viceroy for final talks. On the 30th of September Gandhiji wrote in the *Harijan* : "Strange as it may appear, my sympathies are wholly with the allies. Willy nilly this war is resolving itself into one between social democracy as the West has evolved and totalitarianism as it is typified in Herr Hitler."

But the pleadings of the Congress leaders, the avowals of pro-British sympathies and the warnings of consequences were brushed aside, and the Viceroy issued on October 17 a statement to the following effect :

"I am authorized by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties, and interests in India, and with the Indian princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as might seem desirable."[33]

His Excellency announced also the immediate establishment of a consultative group, representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian princes, which would have as its object the association of public opinion in India with the questions relating to war activities.

Such a supercilious, lumbering, laboured declaration which might chill the most ardent hearts, could not conceivably kindle the spark of sympathy, much less of enthusiasm in the Indian mind.

Gandhiji characterized this declaration as "profoundly disappointing" and opined, "The Viceroy's declaration shows clearly that there is to be no democracy for India, if Britain can prevent it. Another Round Table Conference is promised at the end of the War. Like its predecessor it is bound to fail. The Congress asked for bread and it has got a stone."[34]

Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Congress, declared, "There is no room now left for any one to doubt that British policy remains as it always has been." Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Liberal leader, com-

[32] *Ibid.*, The Secretary of State to the Viceroy, September 22, 1939, no. 631, Private and Personal.

[33] *The Indian Annual Register,* 1939, Vol. II, p. 387.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 393.

mented, "The Viceroy's declaration is bound to cause much disappointment."

Jawaharlal and Azad in a joint statement said, "If this is the final answer of the British Government to the poeple of India, then, there is no common ground between the two and our paths diverge completely."[35]

On the 22nd October the Working Committee met at Wardha and passed a resolution calling upon the Congress ministries to resign. A week later the resignations started and by the middle of November all the Congress ministries were out of office. The break was complete.

Who was responsible for the contretemps from which woeful results followed ? The Governors of the Provinces had informed the Viceroy that the Congress ministers wanted to continue in office. Munshi from Bombay and Rajagopalachari from Madras urged upon the Viceroy to win over Gandhiji who was quite accommodating. When Gandhiji saw the Viceroy on September 24 and 26 he requested him to make a declaration in favour of Dominion Status. Linlithgow knew that the demand could be met by a firm commitment on Dominion Status after the War, and immediate concession in the composition of the Government at the Centre.[36]

Jawaharlal the author of the Resolution explained that Zetland had misunderstood its meaning and that it did not shut the door on cooperation. It suggested the way in which the Congress could honourably extend its hand of friendship. Even the European association and Anglo-Indian papers commended the desirability of announcing the war aims.

Linlithgow realized that the situation was changing so fast that something required to be done at once. Left to himself he might not have objected either to a declaration of war aims or reiteration of the formula of Samuel Hoare accompanied with some advance in the central sphere. But the British Cabinet and the Secretary of State for India would not consent. Their arguments with which Linlithgow eventually agreed were—(1) Parliament would not reopen constitutional discussion during the war, (2) no political advance could be contemplated in view of the opposition it would excite among the Muslims.

The first argument was just specious, an excuse for doing nothing, for a short bill introduced by Government could scarcely encounter much opposition, and the process of legislation could always be shortened. The second argument was obviously dishonest. The

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 394.

[36] *Private Office Papers of S. S.*: Viceroy to the Secretary of State, No. 2097-S, September 27, 1939.

Premiers of the Muslim majority Provinces could not possibly have obstructed even if the Muslim League so desired. Sikandar Hayat of Panjab and Fazlul Haq of Bengal were totally committed to Government. Notwithstanding their public utterances to maintain the show of Muslim solidarity, they dared not defy the Government, provided its attitude was clear and not wobbling. Sind and Assam Premiers were least likely to take a defiant stance. Jinnah was the exception; he was most obdurate on the question of the Muslim minority rights and pleaded that the Muslims of the Minority provinces were most perturbed at the prospect of a new declaration by the Viceroy. He informed Linlithgow that "he had received representations from professors of Aligarh urging him in no circumstances to reach agreement either with the Congress or with the Governor General unless the plan to create a United India was abandoned and protection was given to Moslem minorities in the Provinces."[37]

Was the statement valid—namely, "communal tension in some Congress Provinces,—the United Provinces (where the Muslims were in a minority of about 14 per cent) in particular—is so very high that the prospect of unrestrained Hindu Raj at the Centre might easily produce a major explosion ?" Was the conclusion that the Congress demand 'would no doubt be highly damaging' correct ?

Here was again the old question raised by Wedgwood Benn at the Round Table Conference, which needed an answer : "Was the majority to be denied freedom and democratic rule because the minority (less than 25 per cent of the population) was opposed ?" Jinnah's demand of equality was on the face of it absurd. Equality in power, rights and privileges must flow from equality in responsibility, duty and sacrifice; for instance, was the Muslim community in a position to bear an equal burden of taxation with the Hindus ? And how could its resources in numbers, material and economic power, apart from education, etc., be equalized with those of the Hindus ?

But this entire line of thinking in terms of religious communities in a democratic setting is irrelevant and misleading.

Now if the Government had won the Congress cooperation what would have been the situation ? Seventy-five per cent of the people comprising the entire non-Muslim element would have supported Government. The Muslims of the Panjab, because of their employment in the defence forces, because of their secure domination over the Province, and because of the other favours which they enjoyed, would in all likelihood have refrained from disturbing peace, especially because the Chief Minister Sikandar Hayat Khan was not a blind follower of Jinnah. So far as the Muslims of Bengal were concerned,

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[37] *Ibid.*, The Viceroy to the Secretary of State, October 7, 1939, No. 2183-S.

they belonged to the most indigent classes largely under the influence of Mullahs and Maulvis. In 1939, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama had broken with the Muslim League and joined the Congress. Their influence on the poorer classes of Muslims was considerable and could not have been exerted against the Congress. The experience of the Khilafat agitation during the First World War clearly showed that the backbone of the movement consisted of the Jamiat-ul-Ulama and its followers. As Wedgwood Benn pointed out in the House of Commons. "The Moslems can enter this War with a better heart than in the last War, because we have three great Mohammedan Powers, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey, in alliance with ourselves."[38]

Did then the Muslim middle class of U.P. present such a threat to the British Raj, as to oblige the Government to placate Jinnah? The answer is obviously, no.

Although Zetland was frightened of the opposition of the Muslims and thought that they would provide the biggest obstacle to the early achievement of the freedom, Linlithgow did not agree. He wrote to the Secretary of State on May 19, 1939:

"Our difficulty is that the root of these Muslim apprehensions is inherent in any scheme of responsible government at the Centre. ... No plan for federation based upon representative government can be acceptable to those Muslims who contemplate the future course of Indian politics as an unending communal contest. ... I do not wish to underrate the difficulties likely to arise as the consequence of Muslim opposition to Federation. But I do not think that Muslims have it in their power to prevent the attainment of Federation or to make it unworkable. ... Indeed I shall be most surprised if when the test comes Muslims do not work the Federal Constitution to the best of their opportunities."[39]

The fact is that the British rulers of India had no inclination—as Gandhiji stated, to establish democracy and freedom in India, or to hand over power to their enemy—the Indian National Congress. The Muslim bogy was exploited to deceive the world which was wholly ignorant of Indian affairs.

VII. British Insistence on Status Quo

The 22nd October resolution of the Working Committee caused a flutter. The Government of India realized that the policy of *non possumus* could not pay, and that it was necessary to make another

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[38] *The Indian Annual Register,* 1939, Vol. II, p. 395.

[39] Zetland, Marquess of, *Essayez,* p. 250.

effort to prevent the most powerful political party from taking the next logical step, which might do much harm.

But Jinnah calculated that the withdrawal of Congress governments offered a golden opportunity to increase the strength of the League in the country, (1) by inciting the Muslim community against the hated enemy—the Congress, and (2) by cementing his friendship with the Government which was already committed to favour the Muslims.

The Congress was divided in its counsels. Subhas Bose and his Forward Bloc on the fringe advocated no compromise with the British. For them independence of India was the supreme goal which did not exclude any means—violent or non-violent. In order to achieve their end which was out and out political, such considerations as gratitude, generosity and charity were irrelevant. England's difficulty was India's opportunity. After all England's policy was wholly determined by its own interests and Indian interests were presumed by British statesmen as subordinate to British purpose. When India's self-respect was disregarded and its aspirations trampled upon, why should India be expected to aid England in waging its war ?

Jawaharlal's mind seemed driven in two directions—anxiety for immediate independence and sympathy for the allied cause. He regarded the war not as a fight between two nations for political ascendancy and material gain, but a clash between two ideals which involved the destiny of men. He desired that India should support the forces which promised the triumph of freedom, democracy and human values. He detested the ideas on which fascism and nazism were based—race discrimination, racial domination, denial of freedom and equality. But he was also aware that in England, too, there were advocates of imperialism and supremacy of the white race, along with a few broad-minded people who were opposed to the idea of exploitation of one people by another, and who looked forward to equality of races within the British Commonwealth of nations. He naturally wished to strengthen the latter by insisting upon the declaration of the objectives of war, especially in relation to India.

Gandhiji characteristically steered a middle course in favour of settlement. He hated the violent, aggressive and immoral Nazi and Fascist attitude and action. He approved of the British and French stand. But he was no longer in a position to dictate the policy of the Congress in spite of the fact that he was loved and revered by Congressmen. He knew the Congress wanted an objective proof of Britain's proclaimed war aims—freedom and democracy. It did not trust the mere verbal promises of British statesmen, although personally he was against bargaining and was convinced of the sincerity of Linlithgow.

Immediately a triangular dialogue ensued. The Secretary of State advised the Viceroy on 26th October to invite the leaders of the Cong-

ress and the Muslim League and discuss the situation with them. On behalf of the Government he stated :

"Cabinet agreement, covering if that stage is reached, the entertainment of proposals for including Indian leaders in the Central Government . . . subject to these restrictions, that C-in-C remains a member of the Executive Council and that it should always be understood that this arrangement will not diminish or remove the powers conferred on you by Section 42(2) ninth schedule or on me by Section 312 of the Act of 1935. It should be further understood that there would be no impairment of British control over security and armed forces and the right to move these forces either inside or outside India."[40]

But regarding the future, the Cabinet was not prepared to make any commitment. In the debate in the House of Commons on 26th October Wedgwood Benn expressed the opinion that the demand of the Congress for a declaration of Britain's war aims was quite proper. He said, "If our war aim is the defence of a great principle you can rally not only India but the whole world to it."[41] He did not think that the Muslims could object to fight for England.

Samuel Hoare in replying on behalf of the Government observed, "Dominion Status is not a prize that is given to a deserving community but is the recognition of the facts that actually exist. . . . If there are difficulties in the way they are not of our making. They are inherent in the many divisions between the classes and communities in the great sub-continent. It must be the aim of Indians themselves to remove these divisions. . . . The Princes are afraid of domination by British India, the Moslems are firmly opposed to a Hindu majority at the Centre. The Depressed Classes and other minorities genuinely believe that responsible Government, meaning a Government dependent on the Hindu majority, will sacrifice their interests. So long as these anxieties exist it is impossible for the Government to accept the demand for immediate and full responsibility at the Centre on a particular date."[42]

So the Government transferred the responsibility for the fulfilment of the Congress demand on the Congress itself.

But on November 2, in the House of Lords Herbert Samuel answered Hoare and regarding the communal settlement pointed out, "The Government say that if only Indians could agree among themselves on the outstanding questions as between the communities and between the Congress Party and the States, at once Dominion Status could be brought into effect. But that in substance means that Moslems are to have veto on the introduction of Dominion Status.

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[40] *Private Office of S.S.'s Papers* : From the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, October 26, 1939.

[41] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. II, p. 398.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 399-400.

Mohammedan India is not eager for federation. . . . Consequently the present policy of His Majesty's Government leads to the conclusion that the final decision is left with the Moslems, that would mean one-fourth of the population of India is to decide the future of India rather than three-fourth. Such a situation may easily become a permanent deadlock and it is not surprising that the Congress suspects that that is the intention."[43]

He accused that the Government in England and in India had not shown sufficient zeal and energy in tackling these difficult problems. They had been rather too content to let matters drift. He suspected the postponement of the Federation on account of the war "brought a sigh of relief from many breasts in New Delhi and perhaps Whitehall at the unexpected and welcome respite".[44] He did not see why statesmen who would be engaged in dealing with those Indian constitutional problems, should be engaged in active prosecution of war measures. He said, "It would be immense proof of the strength and governing ability, if while with one hand we were conducting a great war, with the other we were dealing with difficult material problems in some parts of the Empire."[45]

The Congress goal which was explained in the resolutions of the Congress and the writings and speeches of Gandhiji and other nationalist leaders was not substantially different from what the Government professed or the Muslims claimed. All three apparently agreed in their public declarations that the goal of India was independence, whether designated as Purna Swaraj or Dominion Status of the Westminster variety, or full responsible government.

But the agreement ended there. The vital difference between the Congress and the Viceroy, according to Gandhiji, "consists in the fact that the Viceroy's offer contemplates final determination of India's destiny by British Government, whereas the Congress contemplates just the contrary. The Congress position is that the task of real freedom consists in the people of India determining their own destiny without outside influence."[46] In view of the war situation the Congress was anxious about India's status as a belligerent, whether it would enter into the war and participate in its dangers and sacrifices as an equal partner of the allies and their colleagues, or as a dependent obliged to carry out their will.

Hence it asked Britain to declare unequivocally the aims of war and how far they applied to India. And if the aim was to save world freedom from the threat of dictatorship and to safeguard democracy

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 405.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 406.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Tendulkar, D. G., *Mahatma*, Vol. V (1969 ed.), p. 231.

from the onslaught of totalitarianism and fascist tyranny, it should be translated from words into action in so far as the Indian situation demanded.

The Congress desired that England should make India feel the thrill of freedom so that it might throw itself enthusiastically into the war. It did not insist upon the details of the interim arrangements, it was concerned with the spirit of government.

So far as the communal question was concerned, the solution proposed was that the Indian constitution should be settled by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise. In order to provide against the fear of the Muslims that they would be overwhelmed by the Hindu majority in the Assembly, it was proposed that the Muslim rights would not be determined by majority vote but by agreement between the parties, and in case of difference, by arbitration.

Gandhiji's stand was that the Government should abandon its equivocation between profession and practice, recognise the freedom of India and abstain from making excuses on the plea of minority rights. He asked, were the British more interested in the contentment of all sections of the Indian people or the people of India themselves, and how was it possible to protect the minority when the British power was eliminated, except through mutual understanding and goodwill of the communities?

But these arguments did not convince the two parties—the British Government and the Muslim League, and the questions remained unanswered. The British were not prepared to commit themselves to Indian independence, partly because they did not want to jeopardise their future imperial interests, particularly as no one could foresee the results of the war. Their immediate difficulty was that they had no trust in the bona fides of the Indian leaders, especially the Congress, whom they considered as enemies of the Raj, nor had they confidence in the capacity of Indians to conduct efficiently the operations of war—even behind the fighting line. The communal question was used as a pretext for rejecting the Congress demand and to gain time.

It is immaterial from the point of view of the consequences whether the British genuinely believed in the correctness of the Muslim fears of the Hindus and the Muslim assertion of differences with the Hindus, or they deliberately exploited the differences in their own interest as part of imperialist strategy. They argued—independence (Dominion Status) depended on the solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem. The solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem required the renunciation of the claim of the Congress that it represented all Indians and the acceptance of the Jinnah and British thesis that the Congress was a Hindu organisation and Jinnah's League the sole authoritative representative of all Indian Muslims. If the Congress refused to admit the Jinnah thesis even partly and disagreed about a comma or full stop of Jinnah's

demand, the entire responsibility for failure of settlement and denial of independence fell upon the Congress.

VIII. The Second Stage of the War

By March 1940 the first stage of the war was ending. After conquering Poland, Hitler attempted to come to an understanding with the Western Powers. He entered into a non-aggression pact with Russia and shared with Stalin in the partition of Polish territory. In November 1939, Russia invaded Finland, and before the Western allies could intervene effectively Finland had to sue for peace.

Russia's attack upon Finland suggested to Germany the occupation of the Scandinavian countries. On April 9, the Germans attacked Norway, while Chamberlain was assuring the British Parliament that Hitler "had missed the bus", he speedily overran Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg by May 10.

The failure of the British navy to save the Scandinavian countries or the Netherlands and the astounding success of the German air arm caused grave alarm. In Parliament, Leo Amery, a senior member, in a bitter speech addressed to the Prime Minister the words of Cromwell "In the name of God, go".

Chamberlain had to go and Churchill, the man of destiny, succeeded him on May 10. Although he promised nothing but "blood, toil, tears and sweat" his hope-inspiring assurance of victory uplifted the dejected hearts of the British people. Immediately, however, the war had assumed a sombre mien.

During the stage from April 1940 to December 1942, the war developed with lightening speed. In May, Holland capitulated and soon Belgium followed. The German storm-troopers smashed through Sedan and drove a wedge between the French and the British armies. Under their mighty blows the French reeled, they withdrew from Paris on June 14 and sued for armistice. The entire Atlantic coast of France came under German occupation. The greater part of the British forces, however, was evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk.

In June, German successes induced Italy to throw in her lot with the victor. The Italians entered Sudan and invaded British Somaliland. England was now left alone to face the triumphant foe. Hitler opened the blitzkrieg against friendless England by large-scale night and day bombing and keeping an armada ready to cross the channel for invasion. During the summer and autumn of 1940 the battle for Britain raged furiously, and the state of England was critical.

Another frightening prospect which appeared nearer home was the attack of the German submarines and aeroplanes on the mercantile

shipping—the life-line of England. While the Battle of England was on, Britain was suffering huge losses at sea. It is estimated that they amounted to four hundred thousand tons of shipping a month. But the U. Boat warfare proved a blessing in disguise. For it brought the USA to the aid of the United Kingdom and ultimately into war.

By September 1940, America was offering all help to England 'short of war'. The supplies afforded tremendous relief. In March 1941 the Lease-Lend Bill was signed by the USA President. Besides, the Americans took over the patrolling of the seas from Iceland to the eastern coastline of USA which greatly reduced the losses. The danger of invasion passed away.

In 1941, there was little improvement in the prospects of war. Although the fear of invasion of England had receded, fortune still favoured the Nazis, as the Germans overran northern Africa and threatened Egypt. In a fell sweep they conquered Greece and Crete in April and May 1941. Then came the crowning folly of Hitler's megalomaniac plans of conquest. On June 22, 1941, he invaded Russia.

Soon after the invasion of Russia, Churchill and Roosevelt met on board a ship, at Argentia naval base of Newfoundland, and although they did not formally enter into a war alliance, the Atlantic Charter which the two signed on August 12, 1941, was practically a declaration of war against the Nazis, for the sixth article of the Charter spoke of "the final destruction of Nazi tyranny".

France had been knocked out and Britain placed on the defensive. So elated Germany turned to Russia, and while one German army rapidly advanced to St. Petersburg (Leningrad), the second drove on towards Moscow and a third rushed across Ukraine to Stalingrad. Hitler expected to bring the Soviet Government to its knees within six weeks to six months. In the event, his calculations went utterly wrong, but for the time being Germany appeared invincible and the German might irresistible.

To the dangers impending in the western and eastern theatres of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, a new and formidable peril was added in the Far East. Japan delivered a devastating attack on Pearl Harbour in the Hawaii Island on December 7, 1941. Soon they overran Philippines, Malaya and British and Dutch possessions in south-east Asia. The British suffered great losses and in February 1942 Singapore fell into Japanese hands. Their advance in Burma could not be stopped and they rapidly marched through the forests of Burma towards Assam. The war had come to the borderland of India by the middle of 1942.

The attack on Pearl Harbour overcame the remnants of reluctance on the part of USA to enter the war. While Germany and Italy jubilantly joined Japan, the United States declared immediate war on the three. Thus its vast resources in industrial and economic power

became available to the democratic nations. Churchill noted in his book: "No American will think it wrong of me if I proclaim that to have the United States at our side was to me the greatest joy. . . . So we had won after all. . . . England would live, Britain would live, the Commonwealth of Nations and the Empire would live."[47] In the words of Edward Grey, the United States is like "a great boiler. Once the fire is lighted under it there is no limit to the power it can generate."[48] This unlimited power was at the disposal of the allies.

When the USA jumped into the fray at the end of 1941, its war potential was little developed. The time that it took to do so was a period of suffering and setbacks for England. There were disasters to the British arms in North Africa, and shattering blows in South East Asia. The losses in shipping which had been about four million tons in 1940 and 1941 had reached the colossal figure of 7.8 million tons for 1942.[49]

In the west, however, the war was becoming stabilized. The German war machine was losing its initial momentum. The three thrusts into Russia against Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Moscow and Stalingrad were held up and soon the Germans would have to retreat in north Africa. Germans had lost their superiority and were now on the defensive. The invasion of England had to be abandoned because of the serious losses of German air force, and the Atlantic was being relentlessly cleared of the German U Boats as a result of the rapid growth of American sea and air might. The situation in the south-east Asia remained unsatisfactory, but it was obvious that in case Germany was eliminated, Japan alone could not prove dangerous to the Empire.

IX. Britain Postpones Settlement of Indian Issue

During the second stage of the war France and England were the main targets of German attack. France was knocked out at an early stage and then Hitler concentrated his effort against England. In the life and death struggle which ensued the British attitude was to exploit all the means and resources of the Empire for waging the war. No risks could be taken and no experiments permitted in administration. The immediate must have preference over the future.

The Conservative Party which was in power worked on these lines. And when Churchill assumed the premiership the policy was pursued with great rigidity. Churchill was the crustiest of Tories on the Indian question. His mind still dwelt in the old world of the early

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[47] Churchill, W. S. *The Second World War,* Vol. III, p. 539.

[48] *Ibid.,* p. 540.

[49] *Ibid.,* Appendix E, p. 697; *Ibid.,* Vol. IV, Appendix E, p. 860.

20th century, when he came out to India and served as a young subaltern on the North-West frontier in the Malakand campaign.

Possessed by prejudices acquired then, he had defied the Conservative Party in 1932—35 when the constitution of India was being hammered out by the Round Table Conference and Parliament, and signified his dissent from the Party by resigning from the shadow cabinet.

During his stewardship substantial political advance was unthinkable, but for the sake of world opinion—really American opinion, some gesture was necessary which became imperative when America declared open war against the Central European powers and Japan. Between September 1939 and December 1940 no such obligation existed, and the British attitude was quite unaccommodating. It was marked by cynical disregard of Indian opinion, and stemmed from satisfaction at India's response in furnishing recruits, equipment of war and funds as well as from annoyance at the attitude of the Congress, and its inopportune 'abstract' demands.

Civil Disobedience

Thus the second stage of the war was ushered in with the sword of Damocles hanging over the head of the Government in Britain and with the threat of partition confronting India.

To meet this dangerous situation the British Government could find no solution. It could neither accurately assess the gravity of the Indian situation nor foresee how it would develop under the fast moving war conditions. Zetland in his memoirs noted:

"I should imagine that the general feeling of most of us who were concerned with the fashioning of the Act of 1935, was—'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'. Conditions in India being what they are there was little expectation that progress would be rapid. The goal itself could be seen only dimly, for the problem arising out of India's cleavage of 'race, caste, and religion', to quote Sam Hoare's own words, blocked the view, while another hindrance to rapid progress existed in the time, which must elapse before India could be in a position safely "to ensure in much larger degree the responsibility for her own effective defence." There was, too, the inertia associated with the vast masses of the huge sub-continent which must be expected to militate against any very rapid revolution of the wheels of so cumbrous and complicated a mechanism as that of the new Constitution. With such comforting assurances in mind the rate of advance seemed much more likely to be that of a stage coach than that of an express train."[50]

Then he ruefully admitted, "one of these suppositions . . . has been

[50] Zetland Marquess of, *op cit.*, pp. 266-7.

surprisingly falsified with the result that the very first election placed the Congress in unchallenged control of the administration over the greater part of the country." He expressed his fear that in case the process of democratization went further and affected the States, "it will obviously strengthen still further the position of the Congress which will then dominate the Central as well as the provincial legislatures; ... the two factors militating against the completion of the journey (to Dominion Status)...namely, the inability of India to defend herself against external aggression and the cleavage between Moslems and Hindus."[51]

In the absence of a definite, well considered and long-term policy, the troglodytes of London and Delhi resorted to hand to mouth manoeuvres, playing the old game of divide and rule, not knowing where it would lead.

The fear that the Congress would dominate the central government became the real motivating force of the rulers.

While the Congress at Ramgarh was demanding complete independence, indicating the solution of the communal problem through a Constituent Assembly, and seriously considering the resumption of civil disobedience, on April 3, 1940, Zetland was repeating in a broadcast, "I am convinced that no lasting settlement in India will prove possible without real reconciliation between Moslems and Hindus."[52] He declared in the House of Lords on April 18, "A substantial measure of agreement among the communities of India is essential if the vision of a United India is to become a reality."[53]

On May 8, 1940, L. S. Amery replaced Zetland as Secretary of State for India. Prime Minister Churchill wrote to the Secretary of State for War (Eden): "it seems to me that we should draw upon India much more largely, and that a ceaseless stream of Indian units should be passing into Palestine and Egypt via Bombay and (by) Karachi across the desert route. India is doing nothing worth speaking of at the present time. ... Our weakness, slowness, lack of grip and drive are very apparent. ... I really think that you (Eden), Lloyd (Secretary of State for the Colonies), and Amery ought to be able to lift our affairs in the East and Middle East, out of the catalepsy by which they are smitten."[54]

The period of throwing bouquets all round was over. The harsh necessities of war must determine the role of subject India in the

[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. I, p. 57.
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] Churchill. W. S., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 146.

imperial plans. In his first intervention on Indian affairs in answer to a question in the House of Commons, Amery stated on May 23, "The attainment by India of full and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth is the goal of our policy. We recognise this as my predecessor made clear in the speech on April 18, that it is for Indians themselves to play a vital part in devising a form of constitution best suited to India's conditions and India's outlook, ... and the policy and plans on which it is based are to be open for reexamination at the end of the war, necessarily implies discussion and negotiation and not dictation."[55]

It is doubtful if Amery was really serious. Having done everything possible to make the Hindu-Muslim settlement impossible, the Secretary of State and the Governor-General preached repeated sermons to the communities advising them to forget what the British mentors had taught them and to live together in brotherly peace and amity in future.

No British statesman from Morley and Minto to Amery and Linlithgow ever lifted his little finger to make their Muslim friends and allies aware of the sad consequences to themselves and to their Muslim brethren of the suicidal course which, blinded by imperial interests, they abetted. But the British were never tired of repeating parrot-like that a constitution to which a large percentage of Muslims objected, could not be established. Yet they never admonished the Muslim League that its defiance of the cherished ideals of the majority of Indians would not be to its advantage.

The British stand on unity and minority rights was only a pose to conceal the real purpose, namely, denial of independence. That they put it on deliberately appears from their conduct in similar case that arose at the same time. This was in Palestine. Balfour had given a pledge that England would support the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine which was then inhabited by the Arab majority. The Jews supported the British. Their anxiety for the national home had been greatly accentuated by the inhuman atrocities of Hitler against their race.

On the other hand, the Arabs who had lived in Palestine since the exodus of the Jews more than a thousand years ago, were naturally averse to the occupation of their land by a foreign race.

The British Government was on the horns of a dilemma. Commissions of enquiry reported and recommended measures of partition. Malcolm Macdonald who was the Colonial Secretary in the National Government of 1939 tried to solve the dilemma by inviting Arabs and Jews into conference—a procedure the British Government was never

[55] *The Indian Annual Register,* 1940, Vol. I, p. 72.

tired of trying in the case of India. Amery, one of the most persistent advocates of settlement by agreement, remarked about Macdonald's happy idea, "as if such a conference could possibly harmonize two fundamentally irreconcilable points of view."[56]

Interestingly the failure of the conference led to a policy statement in a White Paper which seemed to follow the August declaration of Linlithgow—establishment of an independent Palestine in ten years, Palestinians to take part in the administration as heads of departments and an elective legislature.

Amery's comment on the scheme of Macdonald was: "This, in the conditions of Palestine, was just meaningless verbiage, concealing the complete absence of any positive plan."[57]

The comment could with equal propriety be made about Amery's own schemes about India. He had placed Jinnah in the position of a dictator, and knew that his terms were unreasonable and fundamentally irreconcilable with the Congress demands, yet he refused to ask the League to revise its terms, nor would he consider any positive plan for the future of India.

He did not consider what would happen, if because of their contradictory policies, the Hindus and Muslims refused to oblige him and unite. Evidently although Hindus, Muslims and the British all talked of unity as the *sine qua non* of independence, each laid stress upon it for different reasons. The British seemed to grow more crazy for unity in the measure that they saw it become more unrealizable. In their private correspondence the Secretary of State and the Viceroy frankly recognised the insoluble character of the problem and welcomed its intractability, for it gave them a valid excuse to postpone transfer of power.

But regardless of human wishes and calculations the logic of events was exercising its own pressures. Italy's entrance into the war in June worsened the allied situation in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Near East. The anxieties of the people of India regarding their future became acuter. It was necessary to do something to allay their fears.

The Congress gave to the Government an opportunity. Gandhiji declared on June 1, that he did not want to win freedom for India at the cost of ruin of the United Kingdom and that he was prepared to wait till war subsided.

The Congress Working Committee resolution passed on June 21, stated that non-violence was to be practised only for the internal struggle for independence, but was not suitable for purposes of defence

[56] Amery, L. S., *My Political Life*, Vol. III, p. 253.
[57] *Ibid.*

and for resisting an external enemy. The resolution led to the withdrawal of Gandhiji from the Congress. This was as broad a hint as could possibly be given that the Congress was prepared to participate in the prosecution of the war, and that for the time being the programme of civil disobedience was off,

Then in the first week of July after five days of serious argument the Working Committee indicated its terms. It asked the Government to announce the goal of independence for India and to install immediately a national government.

The response of the Governor-General was to hold consultations with the Indian leaders, and issue on August 8 from Simla a statement which was intended to break the deadlock. The statement made three proposals: (1) an immediate expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council by appointing a number of representative Indians, (2) the establishment of a War Advisory Council to consist of representatives of British India and the Indian States to meet at regular intervals, and (3) the promotion of practical steps to arrive at an agreement among Indians "on the form which the post-war representative body should take and the method by which it should arrive at its conclusions, and, secondly, upon the principles and outlines of the constitution itself."[58]

Amery in a speech on August 14 conceded, 'If Dominion Status can be finalized after the war, there is nothing to prevent a preliminary discussion and negotiation during the war."[59]

The announcement could not possibly satisfy nationalist opinion, for while the Congress demanded immediate democratic responsible government, the British refused to make any change in the autocratic system of Indian administration. All that the offer amounted to was the addition of a few more Indians to the Executive Council without transferring the responsibility of the British Parliament to the Indian legislature. Only the Muslim League was happy that Amery had made progress towards the League point of view.

Gandhiji came to the conclusion that the Government did not mean business. The All-India Congress Committee on September 15 requested Gandhiji to resume the leadership of the Congress. In a statement to an English newspaper he said "it widens the gulf between India, as represented by the Congress, and England......My own fear is democracy is being wrecked."[60] In the circumstances the honour of the country demanded a suitable reply. Gandhiji had ruled out mass civil disobedience, for he did not wish to embarrass the Government. The only course open was individual civil disobedience which did not

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[58] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. II, p. 14.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[60] See Coupland, R., *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Part II, p. 245.

amount to a challenge to authority. This indeed was a purely moral gesture and needed a moral objective. Freedom of speech, according to him, was the moral right of man. On the foundation of free speech rested the whole structure of democracy.

The British statesmen had declared time and again that they were waging the war for the preservation of freedom and democracy. Whether their declarations were genuine or not had to be tested. So he saw the Viceroy on September 27 and placed the alternative before him—either recognise the right of free speech with all its implications, or deny the right and face the consequences. This was an awful choice. For it crystallised the issue between Britain and India—rule by force or by voluntary consent. Whatever his personal views, Linlithgow, as the agent of an imperialist power, gave the only possible answer. War, after all, is a vast and total negation of reason and morality, and all considerations which hindered the successful prosecution of war, however morally justified, must give way before war's immediate needs.

In a number of articles in the *Harijan* on October 2, 4 and 5, Gandhiji explained the reasons which led him to the course of action on which he had embarked. In the statement on October 4 he said :

"It is my firm conviction that British statesmen have failed to do the right thing when it was easy to do it. If India is wholly in favour of participation in the war they could have easily disregarded any hostile propaganda. But determination to gag free expression of opinion, provided it was not in the least tainted with violence, shatters Britain's claim that India's participation is voluntary."[61]

On October 11, the Congress Working Committee decided to start individual civil disobedience. On the 21st, the first Satyagrahi Vinoba Bhave was arrested, followed soon after by many more including Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel.

The individual civil disobedience campaign had opened with Vinoba Bhave's speech protesting against dragging India into the war against its will. From October 17, 1940 to December 1941 the movement passed through four phases. In the first phase only the very select persons were asked to offer Satyagraha, for instance, Bhave and Jawaharlal Nehru. In the second phase which began in the middle of November and lasted till the beginning of January, 1941, Satyagrahis were chosen to represent the Congress Working Committee, the All-India Congress Committee, and the central and provincial legislatures. Altogether 11 Working Committee members, 196 All-India Committee members and 400 legislators offered to be arrested. Among them were Patel, Rajagojpalachari and Azad.

[61] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. II, p. 32.

During the third phase from January to April 1941, a wider choice was exercised. The lists were prepared by the local Congress bodies and by the end of the phase 2,200 had been jailed.

The fourth phase is noteworthy for the protest of Rabindranath Tagore against the barbarism of war. He declared in his world message:

"It is no longer possible for me to retain my respect for that mockery of civilization, which believes in ruling by force and has no faith in freedom at all. By miserly denial of all that is best in their civilization, by withholding true human relationship from Indians, the English have effectively closed for us all paths to progress."[62]

The poet representing India's moral conscience had weighed Britain in the balance and found it wanting. This was also the answer of Mahatmaji to the critics who pointed to the practical ineffectiveness of the movement. He pointed out that the Satyagraha was a moral protest and not a politically motivated challenge to embarrass the Government.

In the course of this phase of the campaign the rank and file of Congressmen were enrolled and by the middle of the summer 20,000 had been convicted.

Many eminent Indians outside the Congress were perturbed by this insensate persecution. Sapru tried to break the deadlock, but Amery paid no heed. Instead he made a long speech in the House of Commons on April 22, 1941, in which he censured the Congress High Command for depriving the two hundred million inhabitants of India living in seven provinces of the opportunity to build up the practice and tradition of self-government, and for confirming to a point of fixed determination the growing reluctance of the Muslims and the Princes to take part in a central government in India.

The speech goaded Gandhiji to issue a statement on April 27, which Srinivasa Sastri, a Liberal leader, summed up in one sentence: "Every line and every word of it breathes indignation—of a type somewhat unusual with the Mahatma."[63]

Gandhiji exclaimed, "Mr. Amery has insulted the Indian intelligence by reiterating *ad nauseam* that Indian political parties have but to agree among themselves and Great Britain will register the will of a united India. I have repeatedly shown that it has been the traditional policy of Great Britain to prevent parties from uniting. 'Divide and Rule' has been Great Britain's proud motto. It is the British statesmen who are responsible for the division in India's ranks. . . . I admit that there is unfortunately an unbridgeable gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League. Why do not the British statesmen admit that it

[62] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 7.
[63] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1941, Vol I, p. 326.

is after all a domestic quarrel? Let them withdraw from India and I promise that the Congress and the Muslim League and all other parties will find it to their interest to come together and devise a home-made solution for the government of India."[64]

He said, "Mr. Amery, in utter disregard of truth, misleads his ignorant audience that the Congress wants 'all or nothing'." He reminded him that in June 1940 the Congress abandoned non-cooperation to placate the British opinion and in September he admitted that the Government could not at the moment grant or declare India's independence, and the Congress would be satisfied with complete freedom of speech and pen.[65]

X. Progress of War and the Atlantic Charter

While Amery and Linlithgow were busy with their congenial occupation of denouncing the Congress, and while the dedicated nationalist pilgrims were marching in search of the Holy Grail of truth, non-violence and freedom, sensational developments were taking place in Europe. Three mighty German armies equipped with plentiful murderous armour of the most modern make were sweeping across the vast plains of Russia. A stunned Europe watched in fear and foreboding the lightning strike under which apparently Russia would soon be crumpled up. And then Hitler drunk with victory and with the whole of Europe at his feet would resume his plan of conquest of the British Isles.

Hitler's invasion of Russia, however, did not ruffle the British facade of nonchalant aplomb. Amery announced to the Parliament on July 22 that after eleven months of cogitation the Government had at last decided to give effect to the proposals contained in the declaration of August 8, 1940. In order to justify the magnitude of the advance and pacify Congress opinion he made the gratuitous *obiter dictum*, "There is one India as there is a Belgium or Holland for instance."[66]

Some people fondly hoped that the Atlantic Charter would be the sheet anchor of the people aspiring for freedom, for Article 3 of the Charter recognised "the right of all people to choose their form of government." Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State of the USA, held that the principles of the Charter were "universal in their practical application. Clement Attlee, Deputy Premier of England, gave the assurance to a West African group of students in London :

"You will not find in the declarations which have been made on

[64] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI. p. 9.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[66] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1941, Vol. II, p. 86.

behalf of the Government of this country on war any suggestion that the freedom and social security for which we fight should be denied to any of the races of mankind."[67]

Precisely this denial was proclaimed by Churchill on September 9, 1941 in review of the war in the House of Commons. He explained, "At the Atlantic meeting, we had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the states and nations of Europe now under Nazi yoke, and the principles governing any alterations in the territorial boundaries which may have to be made. So that is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown."[68]

The July 22 speech of Amery, the clear interpretation of the Atlantic Charter by Churchill and the supine acceptance of Churchillian doctrine by Linlithgow furnished incontrovertible proof of the correctness of the opinion of Gandhiji that the British rulers' promises of self-government were only intended to deceive India and the world, but were not meant to be implemented.

After the circumlocution of Amery and Linlithgow and brutally frank asseveration of Churchill, no course remained open to a self-respecting nationalist but to refuse cooperation to the Government in war and to follow the dictate of his individual conscience in asserting his moral right to freedom of speech, even though it led to a breach of a transient law and consequent incarceration.

The civil disobedience campaign continued, till the Japanese menace began to hover over the Indian skies and prowl round the circling seas. 25,000 Satyagrahis had been locked in prison, but in the new situation the Congress Working Committee declared its disagreement with Gandhiji's principle of absolute non-violence even against a foreign aggressor. Thereupon on December 15 Gandhiji resigned his leadership of the Congress movement. The Government helped in winding up civil disobedience by releasing the prisoners. Jawaharlal and Azad were freed on December 3, to be followed by others.

XI. Muslim League's Hardening Attitude

Throughout these negotiations which the Governor-General was carrying on with the Congress leaders, Jinnah was carefully nursing his object of maintaining and expressing the good relations between the Government and the Muslims. His anxiety was reciprocated by

[67] *The Indian Annual Register,* 1941, Vol. II, p. 83.

[68] *H. C. Debates,* Vol. 374, 5th Series, col. 69.

the Government. Brabourne who officiated as Viceroy during the short leave vacancy of Linlithgow in August 1938, reported to Zetland the proposals which Jinnah and Sikandar Hayat Khan made to him for bettering Muslim relations. According to this account Jinnah made the startling suggestion that "we should keep the centre as it was now; that we should make friends with the Muslims by *protecting* them in the Congress Provinces and that if we did that, the Muslims would *protect* us at the centre."[69]

Sikandar Hayat deprecated the inauguration of the Federal plan "which is obviously playing straight into the hands of the Congress and that the Muslims, given a fair deal by us, would stand by us through thick and thin."[70]

The Muslim League took advantage of the Government's need to issue a categorical statement from Patna that it would never agree to merge their identity in a united India. This impressed Zetland so forcefully that "it coloured the whole of my future correspondence with the Viceroy on the subject,"[71] Zetland and Linlithgow, however, disagreed on their reading of the situation. The Secretary of State considered the Muslims the real obstacle to responsible self-government in India, the Viceroy harped upon the negative role of the obstructive Princes. Between them they paralysed all endeavours to solve the problem.

Zetland's apologia in his memoirs is hardly convincing and it is doubtful whether he has satisfactorily answered the charges of Halifax and Templewood against him.

As the war now entered its real alarmist phase, Zetland made a broadcast which was very heartening to the Muslim League. It stated, "I am convinced that no lasting settlement in India will prove possible without real reconciliation between Moslems and Hindus."[72]

On April 18, Zetland repeated in Parliament that a substantial measure of agreement between the communities was the precondition of constitutional advance and he opined, "The Congress party has raised in the minds of many Moslems apprehensions which only they themselves can allay."[73]

The head and front of Congress offending was that it demanded complete transference of power at the centre, which was unacceptable to the League bolstered by the British Government.

Meanwhile some Muslim leaders expressed misgivings about the hard attitude adopted by Jinnah. Fazlul Haq issued an appeal for

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69 Zetland, Marquess of, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*, p. 247.

72 *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. I, p. 57.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

unity and Sikandar Hayat suggested the convening of a Committee of 31 to settle the constitution and the communal difficulties. On July 7, the two premiers met some Congress leaders and discussed the situation. Jinnah took umbrage and censured them for weakening the Muslim solidarity.

The League's Working Committee expressed satisfaction that the declaration of the Viceroy on August 8, and Amery's speech in Parliament marked considerable progress towards the Muslim League point of view.

When Gandhiji saw Linlithgow to inform him of his resolve to start individual civil disobedience to vindicate the right of free speech, Jinnah made full use of the opportunity. He immediately saw that the Government would lean more and more on the support of his community and he would make a bargain to its advantage. His first step was to reject the offer of two seats in the expanded Executive Council and to demand equality of Hindu and Muslim members. This was not conceded.

Amery then, on November 20, bewailed the action of the Congress and the League and assured, "We are only too willing to welcome and promote any such action" as would help the Indian leaders to think out among themselves the problem of the Indian constitution. The Congress refused to revise its decision. But Jinnah stated, "The spokesmen of the British Government have recently declared that the door for negotiations is still open. We the Moslems also reecho the statement and say that the door for negotiations is still open."[74]

What he meant was that since the Congress was non-cooperating and the Muslim League was fully willing to collaborate with the Government, it naturally expected that the Muslims would be entrusted with the working of the scheme of August 8. Since the Government did not do so, Jinnah laid the blame on it, and lashed out, "The failure of the Viceroy's and Mr. Amery's efforts is due to the weak, vacillating and indecisive policy of the British Government."[75]

As ill-luck would have it, Amery in his anxiety to placate the Congress committed a *faux-pas* which was unpardonable in the eyes of Jinnah. Amery appealed to the Indian people to adopt the watchword 'India first'. In a speech on November 12, he said, "It might inspire the Congress to seek a compromise with the Moslems and the Princes—inspire the Moslems not to press their defence of their communal rights to the point of disrupting India—inspire the Princes to bring their system of government into closer harmony with the rest of India's political life."[76]

[74] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. II, p. 46.
[75] *Ibid.* Jinnah's address at Karachi, December 15, 1940.
[76] Coupland, R., *India, A Re-statement*, p. 203.

This belated lip service to unity which was never followed by appropriate action infuriated the Muslims. In January 1941 the Muslim League Working Committee expressed its strong dissatisfaction with Amery's speech and declared that his slogan 'India first' ignored the Muslim community. The U.P. Muslim League raised the slogan of 'Islam first', in December 1940.

At its annual meeting at Madras in April 1941, the League reiterated the Pakistan resolution with some modification.

Then, to assuage the hurt feelings of the Muslims, Amery renewed on April 22, 1941 the assurance "that the constitution itself, and also the body which is to frame it, must be the outcome of agreement between the principal elements in India's national life. That is an essential pre-requisite to the success of the future constitution."[77]

But he cautioned the Muslims on Pakistan. He said, "I am not concerned here to discuss the immense political difficulties in the way of this so-called Pakistan project, stated in this, its extreme form, nor would I go back to the dismal record of Indian history in the eighteenth century or the disastrous experience of the Balkan countries before our eyes today, in order to point out the terrible dangers inherent in any break-up of the essential unity of India, at any rate in its relation to the outside world."[78]

In spite of the discouraging attitude of the two principal political parties the war situation demanded action to evoke a better response from India for the prosecution of war. Soon after the German invasion of Russia the Government finally made up its mind to give effect to the offer of August 8, 1940. In July, the Executive Council was enlarged to 12 members, of whom 4 were British and 8 Indians. No Congress or League member joined. But Sultan Ahmed, a prominent Leaguer of Patna, accepted the membership. The National Defence Council of 30, including the Premiers of the Panjab, Bengal and Assam, was also established. Jinnah censured the Viceroy for including Leaguers in the Council without his permission.

Jinnah was able to take such liberties because he had sized up Linlithgow and found him deficient in both wit and grit. With the Congress his strategy was quite clear. He would wait and see how the Congress reacted to a proposal or measure of Government and then if his interest suggested he would copy the Congress and make it appear that the Congress had obliged him to follow the course, otherwise he would repudiate the Congress decision and support the Government; in either case gaining credit for his stand.

The imbroglio inside the League ended with the surrender of

[77] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1941, Vol. I, p. 297.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 314.

Sikandar Hayat and Fazlul Haq, the expulsion of Sultan Ahmad and Begum Shah Nawaz and the condemnation of the expansion of the Executive Council. In order to deter the Government from straying from the right path, the Working Committee of the Muslim League held out on December 28, 1941, at Nagpur, the threat of direct action in case any attempt was made towards constitutional advance without the consent of the League.

In spite of the assertion of its supremacy the fact was that the League solidarity was not as secure as Jinnah tried to make out. Sikandar Hayat was hedging. He had accepted the membership of the Defence Council, which he later abjured. He remonstrated against the expression of extreme communal feelings by Muslim students. Fazlul Haq was a wobbler. He too joined the Defence Council at the bidding of the Viceroy, then retreated at the threat of Jinnah, then resigned from the League and lastly submitted an explanation and was reinstated. But soon after he broke up his alliance with the League party in the Bengal ministry and founded the Progressive party. He formed a cabinet with the help of Shyama Prasad Mukherji, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, and invited the wrath of Jinnah who promptly expelled him from the League.

The other two Muslim majority Provinces—NWF and Sind, never accepted the ukase of Jinnah and writ of the League. A number of eminent Muslims—apart from those of the Congress and the Jamiat-ul-Ulama, for instance, Akbar Hydari of Hyderabad and Mirza Ismail of Mysore, did not agree with the League ideology of a separate Pakistan.

The British however, continued to repose unquestioning faith in Jinnah, and not even world shaking events made any difference in their attitude.

By December 1941 the world situation had taken a new turn. The Japanese aeroplanes dropped bombs on Pearl Harbour in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. They rained destruction upon the American battleships, and thus raucously opened an undeclared war upon the Western allies. Then they swiftly raided the European, occupied south-eastern lands—Philippines, Indonesia, Siam, Malaya. Singapore.

The war was rapidly approaching the eastern borders of India.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PAKISTAN RESOLUTION

I. BACKGROUND

On March 24, 1940, the Muslim League at its annual session in Lahore, formally adopted the resolution which demanded the division of India on communal lines and the establishment of independent, sovereign Muslim States. The resolution bears the marks of precipitancy and inadequacy of thought and appears to have been passed because the leaders were apprehensive lest the worsening of the war situation in Europe and the hardening of the Congress attitude might force the Government to yield to the Congress demand.

The Patna resolution (February 28, 1940) of the Congress Working Committee had affirmed its objective as complete independence and framing of the Indian constitution by means of a constituent assembly. It had reiterated its intention to resort to civil disobedience in case the Government failed to satisfy the Congress demand. The Ramgarh Congress (March 19, 1940) endorsed the Working Committee's resolution and declared its determination not to be a party to the War, directly or indirectly.

Meeting only two days later the League leaders without considering properly its meaning and implications passed their resolution. They took fright at the Congress resolution on civil disobedience, and looked upon it as a danger signal, a declaration of war, holding a pistol at the Muslims' head, and the League Council with minds obsessed with such apprehension and fears hurriedly plumped for Pakistan.

The idea of an independent Muslim state had been floating in the air for some time. Curzon told the Muslims in 1905, "I am giving you a Muslim province".[1] In 1923 Savarkar published *Hindutva,* in which he defined a Hindu as a "person who regards the land from Indus to the seas as his fatherland as well as his holy land and the cradle land of his religion". In 1937, he presided over the session of the Hindu Mahasabha and declared, "India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogeneous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main : the Hindus and the Muslims. These two antagonistic nations are living side by side in India".[2]

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[1] Khaliquzzaman, C., *op. cit.*, p. 238.

[2] Savarkar's Presidential Address to the Hindu Mahasabha Session held at Ahmedabad, 1937, see Savarkar, V. D., *Hindu Rashtra Darshan* (1949), p. 26.

Lajpat Rai suggested in 1924, a scheme of Muslim states in the provinces of the Panjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Bengal.

Iqbal is credited with having suggested it in his address as the President of the League session of 1930. But the fact is that Iqbal was not thinking in terms of the partition of India, but in terms of a federation of autonomous states within India. Not a strong central government, but a federation of provinces enjoying the largest possible autonomy was apparently his solution for the communal problem. But no heed was then paid to his suggestion.

It has been pointed out that the summoning of the Round Table Conference for settling the problem of constitutional advance, perturbed the imperialist circles in England and the bureaucrats in India, and they set about to find ways and means of sabotaging the purposes of Wedgwood Benn and the Radicals. The leading spirits among this group were Churchill, George Lloyd and Sydenham, ex-governors and others. Hoare and Peel were playing the supporting role.

In a memorandum by Plowden—a Judge of U.P. High Court, confidentially supplied to the Tory group, but published by the *Sunday Graphic*, it was stated that the only remedy of the Indian situation was to divide India into Hindu and Muslim parts, and to meet the threat of boycott by transferring British trade from Bombay to Karachi.[3]

The special correspondent of the *Bombay Chronicle* in London wrote that the fullest effort was being made to divide India into Hindu India and Muslim India[4].

The idea as well as the name of Pakistan were suggested by Chowdhry Rahmat Ali, a student of the Cambridge University in 1930. It appears incredible that a student should have discovered a plan for the solution of a most intractable problem of Indian politics. It would not be surprising if the suggestion came from outside, but it is not possible in the present state of knowledge to give a definite proof of this. Rahmat Ali published a pamphlet *'Now or Never'* in 1933 in which the idea of Pakistan was explained. But the Muslim leaders who came to London to assist the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1933, when pointedly asked their opinion on the Pakistan plan, dismissed it as a school-boyish exercise, a chimera.

In August 1933 the *Statesman* (Calcutta), in June 1934, the *Eastern Times*, Lahore, and in October 1935 the *Tribune*, Lahore, commented upon the idea of Pakistan. But it emerged as a subject of practical politics, when a number of schemes were put forward concerning the

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[3] *Madina* of Bijnor, August 21, 1931, Volume 20, Number 59. Quoted by Husain Ahmad Madni in the pamphlet '*What is Pakistan*'.

[4] *Ibid.*, September 9, 1931.

constitution of India. Among them, Sikandar Hayat Khan's scheme for dividing India into seven zones united under a weak centre (published in July 1939) attracted much notice because of the author's position as the Premier of the Panjab. There were a number of others prepared by Abdul Latif of Hyderabad, Syed Zafarul Hasan and Mahommed Afzal Husain Qadri of the Aligarh University, Shah Nawaz Khan of Mamdot, Panjab, Abdulla Haroon, and so on. All these schemes provided a common central government for all India, with the minimum of powers and fully autonomous provinces.

Along with them Khaliquzzaman was pressing Jinnah to adopt the idea of partition which he had acquired from Rahmat Ali in London and communicated to the Secretary of State, Zetland, in March 1939. Zetland had informed Linlithgow about it.

When on January 10, 1940, the Viceroy spoke in the Orient Club, Bombay, and declared that the Government's objective was the attainment of Dominion Status for India after the war and the immediate expansion of the Executive Council, Jinnah called a meeting of the Muslim League Working Committee on February 3, 1940, at Delhi to consider the announcement.

Zafarullah Khan, a member of the Executive Council, told Khaliquzzaman before he attended the meeting, "that the British Government was prepared to go very far to appease the Congress and as such it was high time that the Muslim League came to some sort of settlement with Congress, otherwise you may miss the bus."[5]

Linlithgow assured Fazlul Haq and Sikandar Hayat Khan that although he was doing his best for the Muslims, the League should send a delegation to London to place their case before the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister.

II. Resolution

The Working Committee appointed a delegation of five members to visit England, and then considered the question of giving guidance to the delegation. In this connection it discussed the scheme of Sikandar Hayat Khan and the proposal of Khaliquzzaman for the separation of the Muslim majority provinces and constituting them into an independent state. The Committee rejected Sikandar Hayat Khan's scheme and approved Zaman's proposal.

The resolution of March 24, 1940 ran as follows :

"Resolved that it is the considered view of this Session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in

[5] Khaliquzzaman, C., *op. cit.*, p. 232.

this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, *viz.* that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped to constitute "Independent States" in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

"That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in these units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them, and in other parts of India where the Musalmans are in a minority adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for them and other minorities for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them.

"The Session further authorizes the Working Committee to frame a scheme of constitution in accordance with these basic principles, providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defence, external affairs, communications, customs and such other matters as may be necessary."[6]

This resolution was apparently the product of Jinnah's own thinking guided by the suggestions of Khaliquzzaman, according to which a central government for the whole of India—weak or strong, was not wanted.

Since the year 1937 which constituted the watershed in Jinnah's career, and since his final and irrevocable breach with the Congress in that year, he had rejected the idea of a united India, condemned the federal union of the Act of 1935, raised the slogan of power and rejected nationalism.

Iqbal had urged him as "the only Muslim in India today to whom the community has a right to look up for safe guidance",[7] to accept his view that "a separate Federation of Muslim Provinces .... is the only course by which we can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims."[8]

The idea which was pressed upon Jinnah from several quarters in the last two or three years at last gained mastery over his mind. He thrust it upon the League at the last moment to the surprise of many, even among the Leaguers. The result in the words of Hodson, a not

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[6] Banerjee, A. C., *Indian Constitutional Documents*, Vol. IV (Calcutta, 1965), p. 148.

[7] Saiyid, M. H., *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, p. 567.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 570.

altogether unsympathetic official, was, "the syntax and the import of these phrases are obscure."

III. Analysis of the Resolution

It is necessary that the resolution which exerted a decisive influence on the future course of politics should be analysed to understand its significance.

The defects of the resolution are glaring. (1) It is quite indefinite and ambiguous about the goal. Does it contemplate one sovereign state—federal or unitary, for all Indian Muslims, or more than one? It speaks of independent and sovereign "states" in the plural, in the north-western and eastern zones or regions, made up of areas or units of Muslim majorities. Does it mean that the North-Western sovereign zone consisting of Sind, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, and Panjab; and the Eastern zone consisting of Bengal and Assam—all containing majority of Muslim inhabitants, would constitute two independent states or one?

(2) The resolution authorised the Working Committee of the League "to frame a scheme of the constitution providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defence, external affairs, communications, customs and such other matters as may be necessary."[9] This omits the provision of a connecting link between the two zones. How this omission occurred might be told in the words of one of the principal sponsors of the resolution. Sikandar Hayat Khan in his speech in the Panjab Legislative Assembly on March 11, 1941 stated:

"I have no hesitation in admitting that I was responsible for drafting the original resolution. But let me make it clear that the resolution which I drafted was radically amended by the Working Committee, and there is a wide divergence in the resolution I drafted and the one that was finally passed. The main difference between the two resolutions is that the latter part of the resolution which related to the Centre and coordination of the activities of the various units was eliminated. It is, therefore, a travesty of fact to describe the League resolution as it was finally passed as my resolution."[10]

The omission was corrected only in April 1946, when the Muslim League Legislatures' Convention decided that there would be one sovereign State—Pakistan. Jinnah ruled that 'States' was a misprint for 'State'.

The ambiguity not only dragged the feet of the constitution makers,

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[9] The Muslim League Session, Lahore, March 1940. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. I, p. 312.

[10] Menon, V. P., *The Transfer of Power*, p. 459.

but what is worse, poisoned the relations between the two regions, and led them to the horrors of civil war at last.

(3) The resolution is equally vague in defining the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority. If India is taken as a unit then obviously Muslims are not in a majority, and that was the sense in which the Muslims were regarded as a minority. But this was repudiated by the Muslim League, which raised the problem of identifying the parts of India where Muslims were in a majority. The question was whether 'area' connoted Province or part of Province. For instance, in some districts of the Panjab the Muslims were in a majority but in other districts they were in a minority. The same was true of Bengal and Assam. The Muslim League leaders tried to equate the term 'area' with Province, and claimed that the whole of the pre-partition Panjab, Bengal and Assam should be included in Pakistan.

The Cabinet Mission in its discussions pointed out this drawback of the Pakistan scheme. When the Partition was accepted, Mountbatten ruled that the parts of the Panjab and Bengal with non-Muslim majorities could not be included in Pakistan. Even then the Commission which was appointed to demarcate the boundaries of Pakistan and India was confronted with claims and counter-claims, and its decisions created quite a number of conundrums, like islands of one community encircled by the territories inhabited by the other.

(4) The resolution on Pakistan did not mention what the nature of the state of Pakistan would be, for there were at least two schools of thought regarding the character of the state. One school represented by Maulavis like Ashraf Ali Thanavi, Abul Ala Maududi were and are still fighting for the establishment of a theocratic state (*Hakumat-i-Ilahiya*). They have been generally supported by the Muslim theologians, the Ulama, who maintain that the Islamic state should conform to the rules and regulations given in the *Quran* and *Hadith* and should not deviate from the principles laid down in the divine ordinances as interpreted by the four Imams and the recognised legists, *Faqih,* and expounded by the learned divines.

The other school consists of many shades of opinion. Iqbal, for instance, held that the creation of autonomous Muslim states would not mean the introduction of a kind of religious rule in such states. He favoured a liberal and flexible approach to the problems of a modern society. He stated that the Muslim state would mean for India, "security and peace", and for Islam "an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian Imperialism was forced to give it, to modernize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times."[11]

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[11] Iqbal, Presidential Address, Muslim League Session, Allahabad, December 1930. *The Indian Annual Register,* 1930, Vol. II, p. 338.

Jinnah himself talked about the difference between the Hindu nation and the Muslim nation in all departments of life and thought, and yet he asserted that if a religious government was established in this Muslim nation the progress of the people would be stopped, differences between classes would continue, and the path of social and economic salvation would be closed.[12] He regarded Pakistan as a temporal state, whose organization and administration would be in the hands of the representatives of the people. In these views Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, followed his leader.

The bitter contention between these schools has prevented to a considerable extent the establishment of a stable constitution in Pakistan to this date.

(5) A more profound defect of the resolution was due to a confusion of ideas about the nature of society and state. The League assumed that the regions inhabited by majorities of Muslims and joined together under one government constituted a nation. It is amazing that these very Muslims who were described, by themselves and by all others, as a community ever since the British conquered India until 1939, suddenly overnight became a nation by the fiat of Jinnah. The transformation would be a unique phenomenon of history, if true.

But it was not true, for two reasons. In the first place consciousness of nationalism can become a settled way of thinking and a principle of life only by habit, and the formation of habits in large groups of people is a process which takes time. The conversion from the settled traditional ways to the permanent acquisition of new attitudes by a sudden leap may be possible in individuals, but it is rare, if not altogether impossible, in the case of masses. That this revolution is still—nearly a quarter of a century since the establishment of Pakistan, far from maturity, is indicated by the secessionist movements in the Western region—among the Pathans or Pakhtoons, Baluchis, and even Sindhis, and the breakaway of the Eastern region.

Secondly, it was not possible to fuse into one nation by a single stroke of the pen such diverse peoples as the Pathans, Baluchis, Sindhis, Panjabis and Bengalis. They differed in the languages which they spoke, and each one of them had developed a literature of its own. Their ways of living moulded by their different environments were not the same, their economies were dissimilar, the western region was rich in wheat and cotton, the eastern in rice and jute; their geographical conditions like land and rivers, rainfall, humidity, temperature and climate were divergent; their social systems—the strong tribalism of the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan and the social stratification of

[12] Jamiluddin Ahmad *Speeches and Writings of Muhammad Ali Jinnah*, Vol. II, p. 64.

the Panjabees and Bengalis were not identical. The racial composition of the five areas was heterogeneous. Their histories and traditions had little in common.

(6) The only factor common to them was religion which may be an ancillary or supplementary force in the formation of a nation, but cannot be the sole or primary bond of nationality.

Community of faith does not necessarily mean unification of the faithful in one society or nation. The peoples of Europe are all Christians, but they are divided into nearly thirty independent states, the Christian peoples of America into nearly two dozen separate sovereign states.

The Muslims of Asia and Africa have numerous independent states and their relations with one another vary from alliance to hostility.

On the other hand, religious diversity has not prevented the formation of nation states. The instances are many. The West German Federal Republic consists of 55.1 per cent Roman Catholics and 44.1 per cent Protestants. The 12.2 million inhabitants of the Netherlands (Holland) are divided between 4.6 million Roman Catholics, 4.4 million Protestants, and 2 million without any religion.

This is remarkable because originally in the early nineteenth century Protestants formed the majority.

In Belgium the population is 9.2 million, but the Government census does not record the religion of the citizen. In this case the Roman Catholics predominated when in 1830 the state was formed.

Switzerland has 45.4 per cent Roman Catholics and 52.7 per cent Protestants. The case of USSR is peculiar, the state encourages anti-religious propaganda. But of the 223 million Russians it is estimated that about 50 million belong to the Orthodox Church. The Muslims who are in a majority in the Central Asian region, from the Caspian Sea to the border of China, are reckoned as the second largest community.

Outside Europe, Canada has two main communities; the Roman Catholics number 8.3 million and the Protestants 7.5 million.

In Asia the Chinese census of 1953 recorded 150 million Buddhists, 30 million Taoists, about 30 million Muslims and the remainder largely Confucians. The total being .600 million.

Lebanon in West Asia is a small country, but unique. Its population of 1.75 million is distributed equally between Muslims and Christians.

Its neighbour Syria is inhabited by 5.5 million people, according to the figures of 1962. But the religious distribution as recorded in 1954 gave 3.3 million to Muslims, 490,000 to Christians and 527,000 to Druzes and Alawites, in a total of about 4.3 million.

In 1947 the population of Egypt consisted of 17.4 million Muslims (91.46 per cent) and 1.5 million Christians (8 per cent) out of over

19 million. But according to the census of 1960 the total number had increased to about 26.3 million.[13]

These statistics show that religious unity or multiplicity has little relevance to the question of political solidarity.

British politicians considered these comparisons between European experience and Indian condition inapplicable. For instance, Zetland held that the analogy was completely false as the two religions of India differed more profoundly than the two Christian denominations, and that Indian humanity was distinct from European humanity.[14]

The second proposition is sheer nonsense, in spite of Hegel's distinction between the subjective East and the objective West.

The first proposition ignores the history of religious conflicts in Europe, especially during the 16th and 17th centuries, between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, which were accompanied with massacres on a large scale and savage wars. It also fails to take note of the wars of the sects of Islam—Sunnis, Kharijites, Shias, Ismailis, Wahabis, to mention a few. Their mutual hatreds were even more inappeasable than the antipathy between the Hindus and the Muslims.

(7) Yet, with the exception of religion, there was no other cementing bond available. It was ignored that for over a hundred years these Muslim regions had all been a part of one political organization and had evolved a consciousness that they were all Indians. They had never felt or thought of themselves as members of a different political order, or social organisation till almost the second quarter of the twentieth century. The Hindus and Muslims belonging to the middle classes and hailing from all parts of India had participated irrespective of religious differences in all-India activities—the Indian National Congress, the All-India Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, the All-India Science Conference, the Indian Historical, Philosophical, Economic and other academic bodies.

The Muslims all over India were mainly in favour of the Urdu language as the *lingua franca* of India, whether they spoke Panjabee, Bengali or Tamil; many Hindus irrespective of their particular language or region desired to make Hindi the common language of India. The educational system was identical from Peshawar to Trivandrum, Karachi to Calcutta. Thus the minds of the Panjabees, Sindhis, Baluchis, Pakhtoons and Bengalis were habituated to function only in terms of all-India unity. What is even more important the Hindus and Muslims lived under common laws administered by common judicial officers. The administrative system, criminal, revenue, adjectival laws, taxes, economy—production, distribution, transport, were identical for both

[13] Statistics taken from *The Statesman's Yearbook*, 1966-67.

[14] Zetland, Marquess of, *Essayez*, pp. 119-22.

communities. Both were represented in the army—rank and Viceroy's Commissions, and many regiments consisted of mixed companies. On the other hand, there were no political, social, economic or cultural activities and organisations which catered for the people of the Pakistan regions exclusively. In these conditions it was not possible for the inhabitants of these territories to switch over to Pakistani nationalism in the twinkling of an eye, and to feel as if they were one people.

(8) What really matters in human relations whether between individuals or groups—friendly or antipathetic, is not the character or quantum of their likeness and difference, but the emotional intensity with which the likenesses and differences are held.

It is the quality of love or hate which determines whether the parties will live in amity and peace or in a state of war and violence.

The Roman Catholics have been as thirsty of the Protestants' blood as Sunnis of Shias', and Christians of Jews' in spite of the exiguity of their differences as any two people differing totally in religion could be. Nor were the relations of the Hindus and Musalmans as malevolent as those between Christians and Christians and between different Muslims sects.

(9) But the possibilities of evolving nationhood perhaps in the western region of India were not wanting. They had the basic territorial contiguity, similarity of economic conditions, community of faith. On these foundations social and political unity could be reared, and for this unity to claim an autonomous state would be natural.

The total population of the four provinces in the Western region in 1951 was about 33.7 million, of them 20.6 million were in the Panjab. Thus the Panjab could provide the central social core which could attract and hold together the lighter populated territorial fringe. The same considerations applied to a separate eastern region.

Gandhiji's strong common sense led him to admit, "The Muslims must have the same right of self-determination that the rest of India has. We are at present a joint family. Any member may claim a division."[15]

But this right did not in any sense accrue to the entire eighty or ninety million Muslims, more than thirty-three per cent of whom were living outside the Muslim majority territories. Nor did the Lahore resolution demand it.

(10) It is passing strange that nobody—not even Jinnah, ever took the trouble to clarify in concrete terms the connotation of Pakistan. Jinnah usually refused to be drawn into an argument about its definition. His usual answer was that it was absurd to attempt to spell out the details of Pakistan; what was required was to accept it in

[15] Tendulkar, D. G., *Mahatma*, Vol. V, pp. 333-34

principle. Merrell, the U.S. representative in India, pointed out, "Pakistan is the greatest bargaining point the League has and Jinnah refuses to elucidate until time comes for him to throw it on bargaining counter probably bristling with exaggerated claims in order to extract greatest possible concessions from Congress. To define now would be to limit and Jinnah declines to be drawn."[16] Yet in an interview with Stewart Emeny of the *News Chronicle* of London Jinnah stated on February 29, 1944, at New Delhi :

"There would be under the new constitution transitional period for settlement and adjustment during which time British authority, as far as armed forces and foreign affairs are concerned, would remain paramount. The length of the transitional period would depend on the speed with which the two peoples and Great Britain adjusted themselves to the new constitution. Finally, the two Indian nations would enter into treaties with Britain just as Egypt did when she won her independence."[17]

This is an extraordinary statement. Did Jinnah consider that the full-fledged sovereign Pakistan was only a distant goal and till it was reached an interim constitution of the Egyptian type would satisfy him? Surely he must have known that the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, transferred only internal autonomy to the Egyptians, but retained British control over foreign affairs and defence, as also general supervision over all important affairs. This was not even equivalent to the Dominion status of pre-Westminster type. Was the grandiose claim that the Muslim League was not behind the Congress in its demand for complete independence, merely an artful screen to hide the acceptance of Amery's offer?

The suspicion is strengthened by the evidence of such witnesses as Penderel Moon and Durga Das. Moon records, "Privately Jinnah told one or two people in Lahore that the Resolution was a 'tactical move'. And the fact that six years later he was ready to accept something less than absolute Pakistan suggests that in 1940 he was not really irrevocably committed to it."[18] He adds, "Jinnah was never known to expound the exact nature of Pakistan, and right up till 1947 there was some doubt as to what he would accept as conforming sufficiently to his conceptions."[19]

Durga Das testifies : "When I met Jinnah after the session (March 1940) and pointed out that Sikandar Hayat Khan had categorically told me that the Resolution was essentially a bargaining counter,

[16] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. I, p. 683. Vol. II. p. 61.

[17] Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 61.

[18] Moon, P., *Divide and Quit*, p. 21.

[19] *Ibid.*

Jinnah replied : 'A bargain, my friend, is struck between two parties. Let the Congress accept the League as the other party'."[20]

The implication is obvious. Jinnah was prepared for a bargain with the Congress on the issue, Pakistan was not the absolute or final demand.

V. P. Menon corroborates : "Though the cry of Pakistan had served the political ends admirably, (Jinnah) had no definite idea of what he really wanted. For instance, in an interview with the Governor of Madras, he is reported to have said that his idea was that India should be divided into four regions, namely (1) Dravidistan (approximately the Madras Presidency; (2) Hindustan (Bombay and the Central Provinces); (3) Bangalistan (Bengal and Assam) and (4) the Panjab (with some exceptions), Sind and the North-West Frontier Province. These were to be self-governing Dominions each completely separate with its own Governor-General and responsible to the British Parliament through the Secretary of State. . . . The Governor-General would have control over foreign policy and defence."[21]

The reports of two eminent journalists—the one a British correspondent of an English newspaper and the other the veteran editor of high class Indian journals, and two highly placed officials—one Secretary to the Governor of the Panjab and the other Constitutional Adviser to the Governor-General, leave little room for doubt that the author of Pakistan was not sure of what he was talking. He was all the time indulging in generalities and abstractions and emotional appeals to rouse passions, but seems to have given little attention to the particulars of the problem and its specific implications.

The premises on which the argument justifying Pakistan was based were mainly two. The first was that Hindus and Muslims were two nations, having nothing in common and perpetually at war. According to Jinnah, Hinduism and Islam were "two entirely distinct and separate social orders, different in religion, philosophy, social customs, and literary culture. They did not intermarry nor interdine. Their views on life and their attitude to life were different. Their religions separated them in faith, and governed the totality of their relations with men. Hence they precluded their emergence into one nation."[22]

From this premise two corollaries followed : (1) The Muslim nation must preserve its separate identity—religious, cultural, social and political. (2) The two inconsistent elements could never combine.

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[20] Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*, p. 95.

[21] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

[22] Jinnah's Presidential address at the Lahore Session of the All-India Muslim League, March 1940, see Philips, C. H., *The Evolution of India and Pakistan*, pp. 353-54.

The second premise was that majority rule was impossible, because unlike western democratic countries where the majority and the minority were periodically interchanging, in India they were fixed and unchangeable. Majority rule meant Hindu rule for ever, and Hindus being inveterately hostile, such a situation was fraught with the gravest danger to Islam and the Muslim community—"the complete destruction of what is most precious in Islam", the reduction of Muslims to a position of permanent slavery.

The part in the premises which had some validity and which justified some of the fears of the Muslims was the attitude and behaviour of the extreme communalists among the Hindus. Their chauvinistic utterances, revivalist concepts, adulation of Hindu customs and institutions—good, bad or indifferent, their detraction of Muslim thought, history and ways of life, and their suspicions against Muslim leaders—nationalist and others, justly irritated the Muslims in general and antagonised the Muslim Leaguers in particular.

According to these communalists only the Hindus were the rightful citizens of India, all others who lived in the country did so on sufferance and ought either to emigrate or to stay as second class citizens.

Unfortunately the Muslims exaggerated the importance of this section and included all Hindus not excluding the Congress in their general indictment.

They drew no lessons from the consistent defeat of the Hindu Mahasabha and success of the Congress candidates in the elections from 1923 to 1937. They continued to harp upon the pretentious, the hollow and provocative assertions of the communalist Hindu leaders who had only an exiguous following, but never tried to judge them in the proper perspective.

The belief that Hindu-Muslim unity was impossible because the Hindus abstained from interdining and intermarrying with Muslims, was ill-conceived. For everybody knows that the Hindus of different sub-castes and castes—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, do not intermarry and do not interdine among themselves, yet no one has ever asserted that because of this the upper caste Hindus were not a single community.

Jinnah's callousness for the large mass of Muslims who were bound to remain in India after his pet Pakistan had been established is unbelievable. He was ready to pitilessly sacrifice one-third of his fellow Muslims in order to obtain the husk of independence for the rest.

IV. Britain the Substantive Cause of Pakistan

Who, then, apart from Jinnah and his League, were the protagonists of Pakistan with whose aid the idea was translated into reality? Apparently the provinces where the Muslim inhabitants were in a majority were not in favour of Pakistan. In the Panjab, the fulcrum of Pakistan, with a Muslim population of 57 per cent and in the rest of the north-western region with over 90 per cent Muslims, the Governments were not only not enthusiastic or indifferent, but actually unfavourable. Sikandar Hayat Khan, the Panjab Premier (1937-42), had devised a constitutional scheme of his own which contemplated a three-tier arrangement—the provinces, the zones, and the centre entrusted with foreign affairs, defence, tariffs, currency.

About Pakistan he rebuked Penderel Moon with eyes blazing with indignation when the latter spoke to him with approval of the idea of Pakistan. He exclaimed, "How can you talk like this? You've been long enough in Western Panjab to know the Muslims there. Surely you can see that Pakistan would be an invitation to them to cut the throat of every Hindu Bania. . . . I do hope I won't hear you talk like this again. *Pakistan would mean a massacre.*"[23]

He adds: "Sir Sikandar was gravely embarrassed by the resolution. His own dislike of Pakistan—or Jinnistan (land of demons) as he irreverently called it—was well known. He had publicly stated that if Pakistan meant 'Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj elsewhere' he would have nothing to do with it."[24]

According to Moon, "in March 1940 a considerable number, probably a majority of Sir Sikandar's Muslim followers shared his antipathy to the idea of Pakistan."[25]

In 1942, Cripps, during his stay at Delhi, asked Abul Kalam Azad to meet Sikandar Hayat Khan to ascertain his views regarding the Cripps offer. Sikandar Hayat saw Azad and talked to him. Azad's report of the talk is as follows:

"He was of the view that the Cripps offer was the best possible solution of the communal problem. He was convinced that if the matter was put to vote of the Panjab Assembly, its decision would be on national and not on communal lines."[26]

So long then as Sikandar Hayat Khan was alive there was little chance that the Panjab would subscribe to the Pakistan of the Muslim League, although for his own tactical purpose he might ostensibly continue to adhere to the League.

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[23] Moon, P. *op. cit.*, p. 20.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[26] Azad, A. K., *India Wins Freedom*, p. 59.

So far as Sind was concerned no Muslim Leaguer had been elected to the legislature in 1937. In 1940 Allah Bakhsh who was a nationalist was the chief minister. On the adoption of the resolution of Pakistan by the League, the Nationalist Muslims held a convention at Delhi from April 27 to 30, 1940. Allah Bakhsh presided. In his address he laid emphasis on the growth of the feeling of brotherliness, good neighbourliness and common nationality. He asked, "but what credentials beyond public meetings does the League present to be recognised as the representative of the majority of Indian Muslims ?"[27]

Jinnah's two-nation theory was rejected and he declared, "No segregated or isolated region but the whole of India was the homeland of all the Indian Muslims and no Hindu or Muslim or any other had the right to deprive them of their homeland."[28]

He considered the idea of Pakistan fantastic, and advocated complete independence for India, because Pakistan was impractical and harmful. He desired the constitution to be settled by a constituent assembly of Indians in which safeguards would be provided for the minorities.

The North-West Frontier Province, an overwhelmingly Muslim region was under the spell of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and although there was no ministry in the Province there was little influence of the Muslim League there.

The only other Muslim majority Province was Bengal (Muslims 55 per cent), which in 1940 was under the rule of the coalition ministry consisting of the Krishak Praja and Muslim League Parties, besides independents. But Fazlul Haq had not much faith in Jinnah's leadership. According to Penderel Moon, Fazlul Haq "had not yet in his heart accepted Pakistan, though publicly he stood committed to it. Both he and Sikandar Hayat were in a false position, but neither of them at this stage wished to risk a break with Jinnah. Sir Sikandar both now and right up to the end of his life thought—and with good reason—that if he were openly to oppose Jinnah, the Panjab Muslims would become divided and he would lose his hold over them. So outwardly he bowed to Jinnah, however much inwardly he might chafe."[29]

Fazlul Haq came into conflict with Jinnah on his acceptance of the membership of the Defence Advisory Council and he resigned from the League. By December 1941 he had become so annoyed with the League Ministers, especially Khwaja Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy that he resigned, and then formed another ministry consisting of five non-Leaguer Muslims, the Mahasabhaite Hindus—noteworthy among

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[27] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1940, Vol. I, p. 325.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] Moon, P., *op. cit.*, p. 22.

whom was the Mahasabha leader Shyama Prasad Mukherji, and the followers of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Apart from the Muslim Provinces which were indifferent or hostile to the concept of Pakistan, a number of Muslim organisations too were opposed. They were the Ahrars, Jamiat-ul-Ulama, the Shia Political Conference, and the Momins.

In 1940, none among the Indian non-Muslims wanted Pakistan, and among the Muslims too not many were in its favour. But as months passed many circumstances combined to increase its popularity.

The first was a rapid change in the opinion of the upper class strata of the Muslim middle-classes. The ambitious politicians saw a wide expansion of opportunities for power and influence as legislators, administrators, etc. The service people—both civil and military, looked forward to rapid promotion and preferment, the professional classes—lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers and others, and the businessmen—entrepreneurs, bankers, traders, industrialists expected ever-widening scope for activity.

But for these classes an equally attractive idea was the elimination of Hindu competition. In undivided India the Muslims were a minority of about 24 per cent who had to strive against over 75 per cent Hindus. In Pakistan the Muslims were in a majority of 85.9 per cent against only 12.9 per cent Hindus. The Muslim young men seeking Government service would have no longer to compete against large numbers of clever Hindu young men, the professions would be more or less monopolised by Muslims, and Hindu business class would not be able to obstruct the Muslims in the advancement of their business, as they would enjoy the patronage and protection of the state.

As this consciousness spread, the enthusiasm for Pakistan grew.

In the second place the policies and practices of the Congress facilitated the growth of the influence of the Muslim League. Firstly, the Congress withdrew its ministries from the Provinces and thereby lost its authority and suffered diminution of its influence.

The Leaguers welcomed the opportunity of the vaccum in public life to spread their propaganda and organisation.

Then in October 1940 the Congress started the individual civil disobedience movement which hardened British attitude against it and obliged Government to extend patronage and favour to the Muslim League. This vastly increased the prestige of the League and its permanent President among the Muslims.

The civil disobedience movement was followed by the Quit India movement of Agust 8, 1942. In consequence, the Congress was banned, all the leading Congressmen—Gandhiji, Jawaharlal, Abul Kalam Azad, Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others, were shut up. The field was left free for the activities of the League.

Thirdly, the Government directly and deliberately supported and strengthened the League and built up the leadership of Jinnah. It has been mentioned above that Linlithgow gave pledges to Jinnah that no constitutional or administrative measure would be effected or even considered without the consent of the League.

The Secretaries of State and the Viceroys repeatedly gave assurances that they considered the satisfaction and agreement of the Muslim community as the precondition of any constitutional change. Thus what amounted to a veto, although denied by Amery, was firmly and solemnly entrusted in the hands of Jinnah.

Even in administrative changes, for instance, the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the establishment of the Defence Advisory Council, Jinnah was given the Viceroy's promise that no appointment of a Muslim would be made without consulting him. When Sultan Ahmad was appointed to the expanded Council and Sikandar Hayat, Fazlul Haq and Begum Shah Nawaz to the Defence Council, Jinnah censured them and protested against the conduct of Linlithgow who had to make excuses for his action.

The coping stone was laid on the triumph of Jinnah when Cripps brought the offer of the British Government too woo the political parties in favour of participation in British war effort. One of the proposals in the offer appertained to Jinnah's demand of Pakistan. The offer conceded that "any province or provinces which do not acquiesce in the new constitution will be entitled to frame a constitution of their own, giving them same full status as the Indian Union." The proposal was in fact an admission that the Government had accepted the Muslim League resolution of 1940.

Lastly, the war situation was becoming every day more perilous. The Germans advanced into the heart of Russia during the second half of 1941, a dingdong battle was being fought in north Africa threatening allied interests in the Middle East, the Germans had occupied Rumania, brought about the collapse of Yugoslavia and the defeat of Greece, Bulgaria had joined the Axis. Thus the eastern Mediterranean was thrown open to German operations.

On the top of all this the Japanese swift progress in South-East Asia multiplied the anxieties and dangers of the Allies, especially of Great Britain. Between December 7, when the Japanese pounded Pearl Harbour and March 7, 1942, when they entered Rangoon, the whole of the vast oceanic area had come under Japanese domination and India was forced into the war front.

Britain was taken by utter surprise and hastily the military high command which had for decades concentrated on planning the strategy of war in the north-west, was called upon to change over to the plan

of resistance to the Japanese advance from Burma through Assam and Bengal into India.

Four countries were immediately affected by the war in the Eastern theatre : China, USA, UK and Holland. The first two were anxious about India's attitude towards the war and pressed UK to create conditions which might induce India to cooperate. The British Government both in London and Delhi, however, was not convinced of the utility of placating nationalist opinion. They argued they could obtain whatever material contribution they needed, in the shape of recruits and supplies, without any support from the politicians, and it was not desirable or possible to undertake any radical change in the administrative and constitutional arrangements during the war.

Although the Congress had refused to help in the war effort other parties were cooperating, among them the Muslim League. The unwillingness of the Congress, therefore, enhanced the need for befriending the Muslims. Jinnah took the fullest advantage of the situation. The more the Government depended upon the Muslims to counteract the Congress the greater the inclination of the Government to concede the Muslim demands, and the greater the enhancement of the importance of Jinnah, not only in the estimation of his own coreligionists who were traditionally worshippers of power and of leaders who enjoyed the favour of government, but also in that of Congressmen anxious to win the cooperation of influential sections of the people for the cause of independence.

In the face of the facts narrated above the inference is unavoidable : whatever other factors might have contributed to the emergence of the demand for Pakistan, the substantive cause which made it effective was the will of the British rulers. They implanted the seeds of Muslim separation, they nurtured the growth of the plant and they finally brought it to fruition.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CRIPPS MISSION

I. ORIGIN

The unprecedented speed with which the Japanese extended their Co-prosperity Sphere in the Pacific Ocean and south-east Asia created great consternation amidst the nations concerned—UK, Holland, China and USA. Both China and USA realized that the war in the eastern sector was bound to involve India, and they communicated their anxiety to UK about the role India would play in the war.

In UK the members of the Labour party, some Liberals and Conservatives, such newspapers as the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian,* expressed concern. There was widespread expectation that the Government would offer inducements to India to cooperate in the war effort.

India too which had so far abstained from participation, was showing signs of changing its attitude. For instance, the Congress Working Committee resolved on December 30, 1941, at Bardoli to offer cooperation provided Britain created conditions in which India could honourably fight for freedom and democracy. The resolution was confirmed by the All-India Congress Committee in January 1942.

Tej Bahadur Sapru with 12 other eminent Indians, who were not attached to the Congress Party, cabled on January 2 to the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, advocating immediate conversion of the Executive Council into a truly national government, restoration of popular governments in the provinces, representation of India at the Imperial War Council through men chosen by the national government, and treatment of India on the same footing as the Dominions. But Winston Churchill who was in Washington telegraphed to Attlee on January 7 :

"I hope my colleagues will realize the danger of raising constitutional issues, still more of making constitutional changes, in India at a moment when enemy is upon the frontier. The idea that we should 'get more out of India' by putting the Congress in charge at this juncture seems ill-founded."

Referring to the Congress he warned, "Bringing hostile political elements into the defence machinery will paralyse action."[1]

Then on January 21, the Viceroy in his despatch to the Secretary of State raised the general issue of constitutional change. The

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[1] *The Transfer of Power,* 1942-47, Vol. I, *Cripps Mission,* edited by Mansergh and Lumby, p. 14. Churchill to Amery, January 7, 1942.

Secretary of State advised him to pay no heed to "left wing pressure and pressure from academic theorists or sentimentalists, reflected even in a paper so important as the *Times*,"[2] suggested that the Government should make no move and stand firm, and indicated the general line which Government should take in answering critics in Parliament.

Attlee's reaction to the telegram was, "I must confess that the general effect of the despatch does not increase my confidence in the Viceroy's judgement. . .Linlithgow seems to me to be defeatist. . .It is worth considering whether some one should not be charged with a mission to try to bring the political leaders together.

"There is a lot of opinion here which we cannot ignore, which is not satisfied that there is nothing to be done but to sit tight on the declaration of August 1940"[3]

On January 28, Amery submitted a memorandum to the War Cabinet concerning the Indian issue and expressed his whole-hearted approval of the Viceroy's views.

The comment of Attlee on this memorandum and the attitude of Linlithgow was devastating. He wrote :

"I find it quite impossible to accept and act on the crude imperialism of the Viceroy, not only because I think it is wrong, but because I think it is fatally short-sighted and suicidal. I should certainly not be prepared to cover up this ugliness with a cloak of pious sentiment about liberty and democracy."[4]

He suggested that a person of high standing should be sent to India with wide powers to negotiate a settlement.

Meanwhile Chiang Kai-Shek, President of the Chinese Republic, was deeply perturbed when the Japanese bombers raided Shanghai and Hongkong, and their armies invaded Philippines, Malaya and Burma. They had inflicted a crippling blow on the British navy in eastern waters by destroying the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* and thus greatly reduced the Allies' power of resistance in South-East Asia. By February 15, 1942 they had captured Singapore and were soon to overrun Burma. China's routes by sea were blocked and supplies could reach either by a very long land route across Russian territory or by air. India as the main base for these supplies was therefore of crucial importance.

Chiang had exchanged his views on the subject with the American Government. But unfortunately neither USA nor UK had treated the views of their indispensable ally against Japan with due consideration.

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 49. The Marquess of Linlithgow to Amery, January 21, 1942.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 75. Attlee to Amery, January 24, 1942.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 111. Memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal (Attlee), War Cabinet Paper, dated February 2, 1942.

In these circumstances Chiang Kai-Shek made up his mind to make a visit to India in order to have a personal exchange of views with the members of the Government of India, and with prominent men in India's public life. He arrived on February 8, 1942 in India.

He had already met Jawaharlal Nehru who had visited China immediately before the war started in Europe. Nehru had come back full of admiration for the Chinese peopie and their President. But the Government of India neither showed him proper courtesy on his arrival, nor liked his meeting with Indian leaders. However in Delhi, besides others, he met both Nehru and Azad and on February 18, in Calcutta, Gandhiji.

On leaving India his farewell message to "his brethren, the people of India" was "At this critical moment in the history of civilization our two peoples should exert themselves to the utmost in the cause of freedom for all mankind, for only in a free world could the Chinese and the Indian people obtain their freedom. Furthermore, should freedom be denied in either China or India there could be no real peace in the world."[5]

He also appealed to his ally Great Britain in these words :

"Without waiting for any demands on the part of the people of India (she) will as speedily as possible give them real political power so that they may be in a position further to develop their spiritual and material strength and thus realize that their participation in the war is not merely an aid to the anti-aggression nations for securing victory, but also a turning point in their struggle for India's freedom."[6]

On return to Kunming (the then Capital of China) he cabled instructions to his ambassadors in London and Washington on February 24, 1942, in which he wanted them to convey to Churchill and Roosevelt his reactions after the visit to India. The following passages occur in these instructions :

To Churchill :

"I am personally shocked by the Indian military and political situation which are in such a state that I could never conceive of before I arrived in India.

"I feel strongly that if the Indian political problem is not immediately and urgently solved, the danger will be daily increasing..... If the Japanese should know of the real situation and attack India, they would be virtually unopposed."

To Roosevelt :

"In a word the danger is extreme. If the British Government does not fundamentally change their policy toward India it would be like

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[5] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, Vol. I, p. 121.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

presenting India to the enemy and inviting them to quickly occupy India. When I think of it I am both worried and alarmed."[7]

Chiang Kai-Shek's warning and appeal seem to have left Churchill cold. But then came the pressure of the President of USA. In the States the British had let loose wide propaganda to defame India and create prejudice against its demands and aspirations. Yet not many Americans were deceived, as a memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State, Long, to the Under Secretary, Welles, discloses. He wrote on February 25, 1942, "At the Foreign Relations Committee this morning there appeared a serious undercurrent of anti-British feeling."

It was pointed out by one Senator, "Even if they had equipment in their hands and capable American officers to direct them, the Indians would not have the desire to fight just in order to prolong England's mastery over them...... We should demand that India be given a status of autonomy. The only way to get the people of India to figt was to get them to fight for India. Gandhi's leadership in India became part of America's military equipment."[8]

The Assistant Secretary was afraid, this anti-British feeling might lead to an attack on the Government for its failure to use its influence with the British.

The American embassy in London informed the Secretary of State in Washington on February 26, 1942, that Churchill was anxious to keep the President well posted with what the British Government was doing in regard to India. He added, "In the meantime you may be interested to have the following information which he gave me.

"1. Approximately 75% of the Indian troops and volunteers are Moslems. Of the balance less than half, or perhaps only 12% of the total are sympathetic with the Congress group.

"The Moslem population exceeds 100 million. The fighting people of India are from the northern provinces largely antagonistic to the Congress movement. The big population of the low lying centre and south have not the vigour to fight anybody. The Prime Minister will not therefore take any political step which would alienate the Moslems."[9]

It was with fantastic lies like this that Churchill, Amery and the British politicians attempted to mislead the world and especially the Americans, who did not appear to be admirers of British administration and policies.

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[7] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Diplomatic Papers, 1942, Vol. I, pp. 605-06.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 608.

The facts of the army's composition are given by Major General Lockhart. He states: "The latest available figures for the class composition of the Indian army are for the 1st January 1941. These show that out of a total of 418,000 Indian Army personnel on that date, 155,000 (approximately 37 per cent) were Mohammedans and 263,000 were Hindus and other religions (including 51,000 Sikhs)."[10]

Of the total of 418,000 the Panjab contributed 201,000 (48 per cent). Of them 96,000 were Muslims and 104,000 non-Mohammedans. Even though the Muslims were a majority in the Panjab, as the total population (in 1941) was 28.4 million divided into 16 million Muslims, 8.6 million Hindus and 3.8 million Sikhs, the army distribution did not correspond with the population ratio of the communities.

Another estimate of the proportion of the components of the Army for the year 1942 gives the following percentages :[11]

Muslims	35 per cent
Non-Muslims (Hindus, Sikhs, Gorkhas and others).	65 per cent

The opinion about the influence of the Congress on the army is utterly irrelevant. The army was a mercenary body—despite Churchill, and its loyalty to Congress was not tested till Subhas Chandra Bose organised from the prisoners of war the Indian National Army, and till the Indian Marines of the navy rebelled.

According to General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, the need of Indian cooperation in the war was imperative, for "aside from preserving lines of air and sea communications to Australia, we had to hold the Indian bastion at all cost, otherwise junction between the Japanese and German forces would be accomplished through the Persian Gulf."[12]

II. Cabinet Decision to Send Cripps

Although Churchill was opposed to the raising of the issue of India in the Cabinet, the issue could not be burked. The insistence of the Congress for a declaration of British aims relating to the war, the wide support which it attracted in India and abroad—including England, and the memorandum of the Indian Liberals to the Prime Minister recommending immediate action, could not be easily brushed aside. The demand received impetus from the open message of Chiang Kai-Shek

[10] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

[11] *Ibid.* From the Marquess of Linlithgow to Amery, March 6, 1942, p. 328.

[12] Eisenhower, Dwight D., *Crusade in Europe*, p. 28.

and his secret communications to the Prime Minister of England and the President of America.

The attitude of the Americans, however, was decisive. They had been displeased already by Churchill's assertion that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to India, and they left no doubt that in their opinion the political problem of India needed urgent attention. Therefore, in spite of the unwillingness of Churchill, and the opposition of Amery and Linlithgow, a cabinet discussion could not be avoided, especially as Attlee—number two in the Government, considered it necessary. Amery wrote to Linlithgow about Churchill's conversion, "Winston after making infinite difficulties for both of us, ... has now, as is his wont—seen the red light (especially the American red light) overnight."[18]

Churchill was inclined to meet the situation by issuing a declaration containing the proposals of the Government for the solution of the political problem. The terms of the declaration were discussed between Amery and Linlithgow both concerning the post-war future and the interim present.[14]

After a great deal of further discussion, it was sent to the King through Hardinge with a forwarding note by Amery. He wrote, "I think its (declaration's) bark is really more formidable than its bite. Beyond setting up a procedure for creating the future constitution-making body, it adds very little to what Linlithgow and I were agreed upon in July of 1940."[15]

Then the President of USA was informed. But on March 8, the Viceroy gave the gravest possible warning of the harmful consequences of the Declaration, especially in regard to the problem of the minorities. He wanted to throw the responsibility on the Indian communities to settle their own internal problem and not on the British. On the next day he sent a cable threatening to resign if the Declaration was issued in its present form.

On the same day the War Cabinet decided that before making the Declaration the Lord Privy Seal (Cripps) should visit India with authority to discuss the scheme of the Declaration with the leaders of Indian opinion, in order to see whether it met with the measure of acceptance vital to its success.

The sudden change of policy was the result of the realisation that the reception of the Declaration plan—in no way more acceptable than

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[13] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 295. Amery to the Marquess of Linlithgow, March 2, 1942.

[14] The terms of the proposed declaration were communicated by Amery to Linlithgow on February 13, and Linlithgow's suggestion to Amery on 25th and 26th February. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-58 and 243-45.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 282 Amery to Sir A. Hardinge, March 2, 1942

the August 8, 1940 announcement rejected by the principal Indian parties, was not likely to be favourable. The Viceroy was positively opposed to it or to any political progress at all. It was, therefore, necessary to send some one to India to discuss and negotiate in order to find out how far Indians would accept the proposals. Another advantage was that a little more time would be gained, for between the declaration and its execution after the war there would be a long interval.

The Viceroy was not consulted about the change when the decision was taken. Amery explained to Linlithgow why the decision was rushed : "The pressure outside, upon Winston (Churchill) from Roosevelt, and upon Attlee & Co. from their own party, plus the admission of Cripps to the War Cabinet, suddenly opened the sluice gates, and the thing moved with a rush."[16]

The consequences of the hasty alteration in the plan were serious and markedly affected the fortunes of the mission. For instance, the Cabinet did not give thought to the limits of authority of the mission, nor to the method and procedure of its functioning.

Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, in his memorandum of February 20, to the Cabinet, had suggested that a fresh effort should be made to solve the Indian question, and indicated the procedure :

"To entrust some person of high standing either already in India or sent out from here with wide powers to negotiate a settlement in India."[17]

The instructions actually issued to Cripps by the India Committee of the War Cabinet were as follows :

"You are authorized to negotiate with the leaders of the principal sections of Indian opinion on the basis of paragraph 1 (e) of the 'Statement of Policy' for the purpose of obtaining their immediate support for some scheme by which they can partake in an advisory or consultative manner in the counsels of their country. You may offer them, if you consider it wise or necessary, positions in the Executive Council, provided this does not embarrass the defence and good government of the country during the present critical time. In relation to this matter you will, no doubt, consult with the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief, and will bear in mind the supreme importance of the military situation."[18]

Later the Secretary of State in the explanation of the instructions stated :

"While it is essential that Sir S. Cripps should work to a definite set of instructions and that there should be no idea that he is going out

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[16] *Ibid.*, p. 404. Amery to the Marquess of Linlithgow, March 10, 1942.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 380

on a purely roving commission, I think there are serious objections to referring to his instructions as if they were an absolutely cut and dried plan (even though from our point of view they are something fairly near that)."[19]

The Prime Minister in his statement to the House of Commons on March 11, declared the object of the mission of Cripps in these words :

"He will strive in their (His Majesty's Government's) name to procure the necessary measure of assent not only from the Hindu majority but also from those great minorities amongst which the Muslims are the most important."[20]

According to his biographer, Colin Cooke, "he did not go as a plenipotentiary to negotiate the terms of an agreement; he went as a British Cabinet Minister to explain and clarify the terms of a statement of policy that could not be altered."[21]

Apparently it was not clear to Cripps whether he was going to negotiate which implied authority to modify the terms of the Cabinet proposals, or just to persuade the Indian leaders to accept the Declaration whose terms were rigid and unalterable in substance. For, in his conversation with the Congress leaders he did exceed the limits laid down in the draft declaration and the instructions. The instances are the composition and authority of the Executive Council of the Viceroy and the provisions about the defence portfolio.

Nor were the relations of Cripps with the Viceroy and the Government of India defined. Ordinarily it would be presumed that the closest understanding and cooperation would govern the conduct of both. Actually the Viceroy complained that he was never consulted though kept informed generally. His Executive Council was never in the picture and made a grievance of this discourtesy on the part of Cripps.

At an early stage Cripps had even suggested the recall of the Viceroy.

Even more serious was the lack of understanding between the Lord Privy Seal and the Viceroy. They worked at cross purposes, one attempting to persuade the Indian leaders to join in the task of preparing the constitution of self-governing India, the other having no faith in a free and united India, and breathing a sigh of relief on the departure of Cripps from India.

On the termination of the mission Linlithgow wrote a letter to Amery on April 11, complaining that he was not informed about the proposed reconstitution of the Executive Council. Then on Amery's despatch he made the marginal remark, "How could I help when I was consulted by Cripps about nothing."[22]

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 407.

[21] Colin Cooke, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps*, p. 285.

[22] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 756.

Again he noted that Cripps had committed himself to the new composition of the Executive Council consisting of all Indians except the Defence Minister, "without consultaion and protested against by me the moment C (Cripps) told me he had done it."

On being cornered on this "Cripps told me (Linlithgow) that Cabinet had given him permission to go the length of 100 per cent Indianisation, if necessary."[23] Much earlier Cripps had told Hodson in Delhi, "You must realize that the Cabinet has quite made up its mind that India shall have everything in the way of *de facto* Dominion Status and complete Indianisation of the Executive Council except for defence."[24]

On April 25 Linlithgow again complained to Amery, "While Cripps kept me in general touch, there was little, if any, consultation."[25]

The fact was that Linlithgow did not believe from the beginning in the success of Cripps mission. As early as March 14 he told Hodson, the Reforms Commissioner, "Personally, I think he'll fail with H.M.G.'s policy, don't you?"[26] About Cripps offer he remarked, it is "like hawking rotten fish."[27]

The difference between Cripps and Linlithgow was the reflexion of the differences within the Cabinet. Churchill and Amery agreed with Linlithgow's views and had full confidence in his judgment. Attlee and Cripps held the opposite view. Attlee had no trust in Linlithgow,[28] and had condemned his views in the strongest terms.

Even the reasons Amery gave for the appointment of Cripps sound curious, but reveal the inner working of the mind of those dealing with the Indian situation which had assumed grave importance. Amery wrote to Linlithgow why the choice fell on Cripps and not on the Secretary of State, as should have been normally expected. He stated :

"From the point of view of putting across what is essentially a Conservative policy both as regards the future and as regards the immediate refusal to transfer control of the Executive, there is much to be said for sending some one who has always been an extreme Left Winger and in close touch with Nehru and the Congress."[29]

On one crucial matter, however, Cripps agreed with his Conservative colleagues, *viz.*, the communal problem. As early as December

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[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 756-57.

[24] Hodson, H. V., *The Great Divide*, p. 103.

[25] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 851

[26] Hodson, H. V., *op. cit.*, p. 95.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Vide* page 2.

[29] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 402.

1939 Cripps in his first visit to India had formed his opinion about it :

"His talks with Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan had led him towards the idea that some separation of Hindu and Muslim dominions might be necessary."[30]

Besides he had been impressed with the problems of the Untouchables and of the subjects of the Indian States, which appeared to place obstacles in the way of political advance.

III. The Draft Proposal

Cripps arrived in Delhi on March 23 and brought with him the draft scheme of the Government for settling the Indian political problem. In the preamble it was announced that the object was "the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs."[31]

The scheme had two parts. The first part prescribed the procedure for formulating the Dominion constitution. The first step was the holding of fresh elections for all the Provincial Legislatures. According to the second step the members of the lower houses of the new provincial legislatures together with the representatives of the States were to function as the electoral college whose business was to elect the constitution-making body. It was laid down that the strength of this body would be about one-tenth of the total number of the electoral college, and its members would be elected according to the system of proportional representation.

The third step would be that the constitution-making body would prepare the constitution for the Indian Union. But if at the final stage a province expressed its unwillingness through a vote of its legislature to accept the constitution "it was free to refuse accession to the Indian Union." It would then proceed to formulate its own constitution which would have the same status, powers and functions as the Union of India.

It was conceded that His Majesty's Government would accept the constitution or constitutions thus framed, and that the Dominion would have the right to secede from the Empire. It was also laid down that a treaty would be made between His Majesty's Govern-

[30] Colin Cooke, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-56.
[31] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 565.

ment and the constitution-making body by which the constitution would provide safeguards for the protection of minorities.

Regarding the right of a province not to accede to the Union, both Linlithgow and Wavell strongly argued against its inclusion in the draft declaration, but the War Cabinet was obdurate in its belief that the provincial option was the only solution of the communal question.

The second part of the scheme was concerned with the immediate and interim arrangements during the period of the war. It contemplated no change in the Constitution of 1935, nor in the responsibility of His Majesty's Government for the government of India, and the control and direction of the defence of India. But it recognised that the task of organising the military, moral and material resources of India was the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India. It, therefore, invited the Indian leaders to the counsels of the country, the Commonwealth and the United Nations, for active and constructive help.

Immediately after landing in Delhi Cripps plunged into the duties of his mission. In his discussion in the early stages he learnt what were the vulnerable points in the two parts of the scheme. In fact Gandhiji who met him on March 27 told him bluntly that if his offer was no more than what was contained in the draft declaration then he need not stay in India but better take the first plane back to England.

IV Congress Objections to Proposal

Of the two important parties, the Congress and the Muslim League, the latter appeared to be satisfied with the scheme as a whole. The Congress, on the other hand, found that its demand of complete independence had not been conceded either in the immediate present or in the future. Its most serious objections were : (1) to the provision for local option which implied the acceptance of Pakistan, and (2) the selection of State representatives by the rulers. With regard to the second part, the question of the status of the Executive Council and especially of its Defence Member were subject of discussion.[32]

[32] See NAI, Home Dept. Pol. I, No. 225/1942. Nehru's telegram to Krishna Menon explains Congress position; and the file No. 221/42 discusses the prospects and causes of the failure of the mission. Only the Muslim League accepted the proposals; all other parties—the Sikhs, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Liberals, the Indian Christians, were opposed to them

Cripps had told the Viceroy's Executive Council in the meeting on March 24, "His Majesty's Government must keep control of Defence, but apart from that participation of others would be welcome to any extent that His Excellency desired."[33]

At the Press Conference held on March 29 Cripps in answering a question observed : "You cannot change the constitution. All you can do is to change the convention of the constitution. You can turn the Executive Council into a Cabinet."[34]

Linlithgow was annoyed with this statement. He had seen the list of members of the Executive Council prepared by Cripps and found that all of them were Indians except the Commander-in-Chief and the Viceroy. His blunt reaction was "that's my affair", Cripps was trying to "bait the trap with my cheese."[35]

From the observations and private conversations of Cripps the Congress leaders came to the conclusion that the British Government was not averse to the transformation of the Executive Council into a national government composed of Indian members—with the exception of the Defence Member, in which the Viceroy would have the same position as the King *vis-a-vis* the British Cabinet.

Azad records the discussion which he had with Cripps in his first meeting on March 25 : "The net result of the proposal was that in place of the majority of British members in the existing Executive Council, there would be an Executive Council composed of Indians alone......

"I asked Sir Stafford what would be the position of the Viceroy in this Council. Sir Stafford replied that the Viceroy would function as a constitutional head like the King in the U.K. In order to remove any room for doubt, I asked him to confirm that this would mean that the Viceroy, as a constitutional head, would be bound by the advice of the Council. Sir Stafford said that this was the intention. I said again that the basic question was as to who would exercise power, the proposed Council or the Viceroy. Sir Stafford repeated that power would vest with the Council as it vests with the British Cabinet."[36]

Linlithgow's letter to Amery confirms Azad's statement. He wrote :

"Cripps in his extreme anxiety to meet Congress claims and to secure the support from them which might have resulted in securing the support of other parties, may have taken chances in discussion which were dangerous, and I am confirmed in that view by statements

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[33] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 477

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 547.

[35] Hodson, H. V., *op. cit.*, p. 98.

[36] Azad, A. K., *India Wins Freedom*, p. 49.

such as those positively made by Kalam Azad in his letter of 11th April to Cripps and not contradicted by the latter, that Cripps had talked freely of a "National Government" presided over by a Viceroy who would stand in much the same relation to it as the King does at home."[37]

Azad's letter to Cripps on April 11, categorically asserted, "as you told me then (in the earlier meeting) that there would be a National Government which would function as a Cabinet and that the position of the Viceroy would be analogous to that of the King in England vis-a-vis his Cabinet."[38]

The question of the immediate formation of a national government overshadowed the plan of the future constitution. The Working Committee of the Congress in its resolution affirmed :

"Any proposal concerning the future of India must demand attention and scrutiny, but in today's grave crisis it is the present that counts and even the proposals for the future are important in so far as they affect the present. The Committee nceessarily attach the greatest importance to this aspect of the question and on this ulimately depends what advice they should give to those who look to them for guidance."[39]

The President of the Congress opined : "I had not objected to Cripps' basic principle that independence would be recognised after the war. I felt, however, that unless *de facto* power and responsibility were given to the Council during the war the change would not be significance."[40]

The formation of the national government was then a matter of the utmost urgency. But during the war the portfolio of Defence transcended all others in importance both from the administrative and psychological points of view. The Congress leaders naturally desired that India should make its maximum contribution in winning the war and defeating the aggressor. This, according to them, required that the people should feel that the war was the people's war. Only with an Indian in charge of the defence of the country could this feeling be evoked.

The Congress having decided to keep the problem of the future in abeyance, and having received satisfactory assurance on the formation of the national Government, felt that the only important matter which remained for adjustment related to the office of the Defence Member.

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[37] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.* p. 774.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 744.
[39] Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 63.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

V. The Question of Defence Membership

The question of the Defence membership thus assumed extraordinary importance, for two reasons: (1) The long-term or post-war scheme was discarded by all parties, though the Muslim League was on the whole in its favour, but if the interim part of the proposals could be settled to their satisfaction, the parties were willing to consider this part of offer without committing themselves on the scheme for the future. They argued that the establishment of national government now would be a guarantee for the fulfilment of the long-term plan after the war. In case the national government was not agreed to immediately, the promise about the future could not be relied upon. (2) National Defence in times of war covered very large ground comprehending or impinging upon every national activity. Therefore the non-transfer of Defence would leave a very truncated sphere of authority for the administration of the other departments. The Congress which demanded control over the whole field of government could not be satisfied with such attenuated authority.

But even on Defence the Congress Committee did not adopt an uncompromising attitude. Rajaji suggested that formally the Department should be entrusted to an Indian member, but for practical purposes, during the duration of the war, the responsibility for Defence would continue with His Majesty's Government.[41] Nehru admitted that in practice the strategic and tactical disposition of fighting units must remain under the effective control of the Commander-in-Chief subject to the Chiefs of Staff and the War Cabinet, but they still urged that there were many other Defence matters which could be handled by an Indian.[42]

Cripps who had informed Azad in his first interview that the subject of Defence was outside the discussion of the draft declaration, had to climb down because in subsequent discussions the Congress leaders pressed him hard on the issue. He sent two telegrams on March 29 and April 1 to Churchill giving a gloomy picture of the Indian situation, and added, "I give you this picture so that you may judge as to the importance from a Defence point of view of getting the Indian leaders into the job of controlling, encouraging and leading the Indian people. This cannot be done under existing circumstances by any Britisher."[43]

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[41] NAI, Home Dept. Pol. I, File No. 221/42; also Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 637.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 601. Telegram from Sir. S. Cripps to Mr. Churchill, April 1, 1942

The suggestion was to appoint an Indian member to deal with some aspects of Defence without impinging upon the sphere of activity and authority of the Commander-in-Chief.

Linlithgow, who did not agree with Cripps' view of the Indian situation nor with the need of associating an Indian with Defence for such purposes as mentioned by Cripps, cabled his own views to the Cabinet and asked permission to communicate with the Prime Minister separately from Cripps. The permission was given and the door was opened for undermining the influence of the Cabinet's emmissary.

So it happened that the request of Cripps—"if some adjustment can be arrived at will you give me full authority subject to agreement of Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy?",[44] was instantly turned down by the Cabinet. Churchill informed Cripps. "I cannot give you any authority to compromise on Defence without submitting issue both to Cabinet and Minister above the line (all ministers except the Minister of Pensions)."[45]

In spite of his failure so far, Cripps decided to make a fresh attempt.

On April 4, he suggested to the Cabinet three formulae for the transfer of Defence functions to an Indian member. Linlithgow communicated his preference for one of them—different from the one recommended by Cripps, and advised the Cabinet not to yield on the question of the national government.

On April 6, the Cabinet rejected both the recommendations of Cripps and accepted Linlithgow's suggestions. They told Cripps that there could be no surrender of authority of the Viceroy conferred by the Act of 1935.[46] This was the first major check suffered by Cripps in his negotiations. It did not improve relations between the head of the Mission and the head of the Government of India.

The formula which the Cabinet approved was, however, rejected on April 7 by the Congress Working Committee, which was in session during the stay of Cripps in Delhi. At this stage a new factor entered in these negotiations. Col. Louis Johnson, the special representative of the President of America, arrived in India with a watching brief. Cripps took advantage of his presence in Delhi and asked him in his personal capacity to help him in disentangling the knotty Defence problem.

Johnson produced a new formula which Cripps approved with some minor modifications. According to this formula an Indian would be appointed in charge of Defence, but he would delegate

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 602
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 607
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 659

powers to the Commander-in-Chief as the War Member of the Executive Council who would control the war operations and the armed forces and would be responsible to the General Head Quarters, the Naval Head Quarters and the Air Head Quarters. The Defence Member would be in charge of all other matters in the Defence Department as well as the Defence Coordination Department; and in the event of any new function falling to be discharged or any dispute arising as to the allocation of functions it would be decided by His Majesty's Government.[47]

The new formula had been shown to Nehru who had suggested some minor changes, but the Viceroy had not seen it in the final form and he protested that he was ignored. He refused to accept any responsibility for it. Churchill then warned Cripps not to commit the Government in any way.

The War Cabinet communicated their views on the formula to Cripps on April 9. "it is essential to bring the whole matter back to Cabinet's plan which you went out to urge, with only such modifications as are agreed to be put forward."[48] It further questioned him regarding the significance of the phrase National Government.

VI. Cripps Retracts His Steps

It was obvious from this telegram that the War Cabinet did not approve of the proposals made by Cripps without previous agreement. The Viceroy too told him that he was not prepared to abstain from exercising his constitutional authority regarding the Executive Council.

Thus it was clear that the hopes he had raised of establishing immediately a national government could not be fulfilled. Nor was the new formula about Defence—Cripps-Johnson formula, although altered in form substantially, different from the original formula which the Congress had already rejected.

He was obliged to retract his steps and in the interview with the Congress leaders on the evening of April 9 he tried to convince them that the original Draft scheme conceded practically the entire demand of the Congress. He urged upon them to accept the scheme, for otherwise, the question of constitutional advance would be postponed till after the termination of the war.

On April 10, while he waited for the final answer of the Congress Working Committee he made the last effort to secure the assent of the

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 694, 699.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 707-08.

War Cabinet to the Defence proposal. He telegraphed to Churchill the list of functions of the War Member and repeated the assurances that the legal and constitutional position was not changed. But he called the reconstructed Executive Council a national government.[49]

On the same day (April 10), the Viceroy who had opposed the transformation of the Executive Council into national government, telegraphed to the Secretary of State to find out the opinion of His Majesty's Government on the point in dispute, *viz.* "Either the Governor-General must continue to have the right to differ from his colleagues (under Section 41 of the Ninth Schedule) or he must promise that in no circumstances, will he refuse to act upon their advice."[50]

In other telegram of the same date (April 10) Linlithgow complained that the Cripps-Johnson formula on Defence Department was communicated to the Congress without prior reference to him and the Commander-in-Chief. His chief criticism was that the formula had taken the settlement of disputes about the functions of the Defence Member and the War Member out of the jurisdiction of the Viceroy and placed it in the hands of His Majesty's Government.

The Indian Committee of the War Cabinet met to consider the telegrams of Cripps and Linlithgow under the chairmanship of Churchill. It appeared to the Committee that the Congress leaders had been informed by the Lord Privy Seal (Cripps) on the formation of a national government that while there was to be no change in the Constitution, he (Lord Privy Seal) assumed that the Governor General would meet the point by means of a convention.

The War Cabinet decided the point in favour of the Viceroy and rejected Cripps' opinion. The decision was immediately cabled to the Viceroy and Cripps; that "there can be no question of any convention limiting in any way your (the Viceroy's) powers under existing constitution . . . and no departure from this can be contemplated during the war."[51]

Cripps was nettled by the attitude of the War Cabinet and immediately (April 10) sent an explanatory message and conveyed his annoyance by offering to resign in these words :

"I am sorry that my colleagues appear to distrust me over this matter, and I am quite prepared to hand the matter over if they would rather some one else carried on the negotiations."[52]

Churchill replied that there was no question of want of confi-

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[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 713-14.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 718. The Marquess of Linlithgow to Amery, April 10, 1942.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 720, War Cabinet to the Marquess of Linlithgow, April 10, 1942.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 717, Sir S. Cripps to War Cabinet, April 10, 1942.

dence, but the Cabinet definitely rejected the suggestion of a convention to restrict the powers of the Viceroy.[53]

The refusal of the Cabinet to support Cripps made him feel humiliated and he came to the conclusion that his further stay in India would not serve any useful purpose. He suddenly made up his mind to return.

Although his decision to wind up the mission was obviously a reaction against the orders of the Cabinet, he wanted to exculpate himself from the charge that the mission had failed because of any act of omission or commission on his part or on the part of the Government of which he was an important limb.

The excuse was furnished by the letter of Azad dated April 10, forwarding the resolution of the Congress Working Committee, which had been gravely disturbed by the *volte face* of Cripps as reported by Azad.

The Congress Working Committee had discussed the matter threadbare and had adopted a long resolution in which it gave its reasons for rejecting the offer.

The resolution explained that in view of the gravity of the present situation the Committee in spite of its strong objections to the provisions of the scheme for the future, concentrated its attention on the part dealing with the present, specially on the status and character of the Executive Council, and in particular of the Member for Defence.

On the question relating to the Executive Council, the Committee had been assured by the phraseology used by Cripps that "the new Government would function with full powers as a Cabinet with the Viceroy acting as a constitutional head." But according to the latest discussions with him, it was found that Cripps had gone back on the assurance and the picture of the new government was not very different from the old. "It would just be the Viceroy and his Executve Council with the Viceroy having all his old powers."[54]

The Congress had not demanded that the change should be brought about by modifying the law and the constitution but by convention and assurance. It had also agreed that in regard to the conduct of the war and connected activities the Commander-in-Chief would have freedom and that he would also act as War Minister. But there was not even a vague or general commitment on the part of Cripps about the conventions that should govern the new government and the Viceroy. In the circumstances the Congress Working Committee had no option but to reject this part of the proposal.

So far as the change of law was concerned it did not believe that a

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[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 721-22, Churchill to Sir S. Cripps, April 10, 1942.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 728, Maulana Azad to Sir S. Cripps, April 10, 1942

constitutional amendment could not be made during the war, for a far greater and more fundamental change was contemplated during the war when the union of France and England was proposed on the eve of the fall of France.

The new formula for Defence given to the Committee was based on the separation of the War Department from the Defence Department, but the allocation of subjects to the two Departments showed that there was no difference between the original formula and the new. The Committee had been unable to accept the old list and could not be expected to approve the same list because it was attached to the new formula.

The conclusion was that the Committee could not agree to the proposals for reasons stated.

This conflict of opinion between the Congress and the British Government led inevitably to the failure of the mission.

VII. Responsibility for Breakdown

On receipt of Azad's letter of rejection, like an astute lawyer that he was, Cripps endeavoured to show to the world that the responsibility for the breakdown rested upon the Congress. So he wrote the letter on April 10 to Azad contending that the Congress demand for treating the Executive Council as Cabinet Government was utterly illogical; although he himself had in the earlier stages indicated the possibility of converting the Executive Council to national government by convention. Now he wrote :

"Were such a system to be introduced by convention under the existing circumstances the nominated cabinet (nominated presumably by the major political organisations) responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed and would in fact constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority."[55]

Having delivered his parting shot from a double-barrelled gun placed on the shoulders of the communal bogyman, he informed Churchill of his intention to leave for England on the next day, April 12.

Before he made his final bow to India, however, he took the opportunity to malign the Congress as a most unreasonable body. By misinterpreting the Congress standpoint he aggravated the suspicions of the minorities against it. In his broadcast on April 11, he attempted to mislead his hearers by suggesting that the Congress aimed at the establishment of an oligarchic, irresponsible and irreplaceable govern-

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 733, Sir S. Cripps to Maulana Azad, April 10, 1942.

ment, the majority of whom would be in a position to dominate the minorities. Then he made the mischievously barbed remark that the great minorities in India would never accept such a system.[56]

The last scene of the drama enacted in England was amusing. Roosevelt who had been closely watching the proceedings in India was shocked at the news of the collapse of the negotiations. So he wired to Churchill through Henry Hopkins on the 12th and asked him to postpone Cripps' departure and meanwhile to make an effort to restart negotiations on the basis that India could be given immediately the opportunity to set up a national government—this might lead to an agreement.

Churchill wired back that he could not decide the matter without the consent of the Cabinet which could be obtained only on Monday the 13th. In the meanwhile Cripps had already left India, and the suggestion of the President could not be put into effect as Cripps could not be contacted and everything could not be thrown into the melting pot.

However, he assured the President, "You know the weight which I attach to everything you say to me."[57] He protested, "Anything like a serious difference between you and me would break my heart."[58]

Churchill's private reflections on Roosevelt's intervention were :

"I was thankful that events had already made such an act of madness impossible. The human race cannot make progress without idealism, but idealism at other people's expense... cannot be considered as its highest or noblest form."[59]

How Churchill might have reacted may be gathered from the following extracts :

(1) "When Churchill received news from India that the Cripps mission had failed he is reported to have danced around the Cabinet room. No tea with treason, no truck with American or British Labour sentimentality, but back to the solemn—and exciting—business of war."[60]

(2) "Churchill had made his gesture of appeasement to the United States and to the Labour members of the War Cabinet. It was a gesture without any meaning."[61]

(3) Churchill sent a cable to Cripps on April 11, which shows that he had no regrets for what had happened. It said :

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[56] *Ibid.*, p. 755.

[57] Churchill, W. S., *The Second Wo-ld War*, Vol. IV, p. 195.

[58] Singh, Harnam, *The Indian National Movement and American Opinion*, p. 372.

[59] Churchill, W. S., *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 194.

[60] Edwardes, M., *The Last Years of British India*, p. 79.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

"You must not feel unduly discouraged or disappointed by the result. The effect throughout Britain and in the United States has been wholly beneficial. . . . Even though your hopes have not been fulfilled, you have rendered a very important service to the common cause."[62]

(4) " When Mr. Churchill learned of the breakdown of the Delhi negotiations he put on an act of sham tears and sorrow before his guests at Chequers, not troubling to conceal his own pleasure."[63]

(5) Churchill's own account of his reaction to the news of the failure was "I was able to bear the news, which I had thought probable from the beginning, with philosophy."

Cripps mission was wound up as he left India on April 12. In order to assess its results, it is necessary to refer to its origin and the expectations of its sponsors. It has already been pointed out that the decision to send the mission was taken principally because of the pressure of the American Government.

Churchill's Government wanted to win the favour of the American public opinion, but had no intention to transfer power. They drew up a scheme to fob off India with constitutional gimmicks and if Cripps persuasive advocacy and friendship with some Congress leaders could carry the day it would be an additional triumph. It must, however, be said to the credit of the sense of realism of Amery, Linlithgow and Cripps that none of them believed in success. Amery knew that it was the same old offer of August 1940 which the Congress had disapproved. Linlithgow was equally sceptical. Cripps thought it had about 40 per cent chances of acceptance. The Cabinet itself had stated, "The present declarations is intended—not to supersede, but to clothe those general declarations (*e.g.* declaration of August 1940) with precision and to convince people of India of the Cabinet's sincere resolve."[64] In spite of this knowledge Cripps went through the exercise using all the arts of diplomacy and every blandishment to win over the Congress leaders.

VIII. Reasons for Failure of Mission

Many people have given a variety of reasons for Cripps' failure to win Congress assent to the proposals of the War Cabinet. The explanation of Azad is recorded in his book. He writes :

"There has been a great deal of speculation in India and some outside as to why Sir Stafford Cripps changed the position between the first and second interviews. One possible explanation is that Sir

62 Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 739.
63 Hodson, H. V., *op cit*, p. 103.
64 Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 408.

Stafford Cripps had hoped to persuade the Congress to accept the proposals, even though there was no change in the basic situation, by his persuasive powers and pleasant manners. When, however, the proposals were examined in detail and he was subjected to cross examination, he felt that he must be cautious and refrain from raising hopes which he was not in a position to satisfy. An alternative explanation is that during this interval the inner circle of the Government of India had started to influence him. ... A third alternative explanation is that during the interval, messages had passed between Delhi and London, and the British War Cabinet had sent him fresh instructions which made him feel that if he went too far he might be repudiated. Cripps was essentialy an advocate and as such he was inclined to paint things in a rosier colour than was warranted by the facts."[65]

Hodson who had first-hand information about the mission and its working reveals the cause of failure thus :

"The fault clearly lay with Sir Stafford in negotiating on such an issue to a point of vital commitment without the clearest understanding with the Viceroy. (The busybody Col. Johnson obviously made matters worse.) But the blame did not rest with him alone; for the War Cabinet, especially the India Committee, made a fundamental mistake, strange in a body so experienced, when they sent an emissary to promote a policy in India which had not been fully agreed with the Viceroy, though he would have to carry it out."[66]

Cripps himself took the line that the Congress was wholly to blame for its suicidal rejection of an offer which met all its demands. He attributed the décision of the Working Committee to the influence of Gandhiji. His biographer writes :

"There had been a long, long telephonic conversation between Congress leaders and Mr. Gandhi. The import of that long conversation with Mr. Gandhi had now become clearer; the Congress Committee had swung back towards the view of the Mahatma—a practical constitutional independence of government was the only road to agreement with the British Cabinet."[67] Gandhiji primarily and the Congress Working Committee as his blind followers were, in Cripps' opinion, answerable for the failure.

Colin Cooke's fanciful explanation based probably upon all kinds of wild rumours then circulating in Delhi was entirely baseless. Gandhiji himself denied it completely.

But the trail blazed by the mediator of the War Cabinet was pursued by the British officials and the opponents of the Congress in India, and by the Government spokesmen, publicists and press in England.

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[65] Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3.
[66] Hodson, H. V. *op. cit.*, p. 103.
[67] Colin Cooke, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

The independent opinion of the American journalist Louis Fischer is interesting. He wrote :

"Cripps maintained, however, that he had full authority to set up a real Cabinet Government in India. On April (9) this authority was specifically withdrawn in new instructions to Cripps cabled from London. Cripps was told therein that he could not go beyond the text of the British Government draft declaration unless he obtained the consent of the Viceroy and Wavell. That explains the collapse of the Cripps Mission."[68]

In reply to the article written by Graham Spry, Cripps' Secretary, denying that such a promise was made, Fischer observed : "Cripps did not withdraw his promise (about national government) because he made it without sincerity, he withdrew it because he was stabbed in the back by Englishmen who differed from him."[69]

On the contrary Laski put the blame for the collapse of Cripps mission squarely on his shoulders. In his opinion, "it was psychologically disastrous for Sir Stafford to go to India in a 'take it or leave it' mood, and, on his return, practically announce that he washed his hands off the offer. That was bound to make it look as though our real thought was less the achievement of Indian freedom than of a *coup de main* in the propagandist art among our allies."[70]

The failure to obtain the acceptance of the Congress did not unduly disappoint Cripps or the Government. For they had gained most of their points. The American urgency regarding Indian autonomy was subdued, and Johnson's credibility put under a shadow; the Chinese apprehensions and fears were reduced to verbal protests by Chiang Kai-shek to Roosevelt; the radical section of the Labour party and the Labour members of the Cabinet became reconciled to Government policy towards India, and were annoyed with the Congress attitude.

The Government obtained plentiful ammunition to denounce the Congress and used it gleefully. What Amery thought of the Congress leaders like Gandhiji and Nehru comes out in a letter he wrote to Linlithgow in which he described them as "niggling unpractical creatures",[71] about whom he was doubtful "whether people of that type would ever run straight." Linlithgow's comment was, "They could never run straight. One will have to plough through the old gang down to better and younger stuff."[72]

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[68] Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, R., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 328-29.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

[71] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 108. Amery to the Marquess of Linlithgow, February 2, 1942.

[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 632-33. Amery to the Marquess of Linlithgow, April 3, 1942.

IX. General Effects

As the agreement did not materialize, the Secretary of State and the Viceroy reverted to their plans of pre-mission days. All talk about altering the character of the Executive Council was now taken as ended. So far as the future was concerned everything was doubtful. Amery wrote : "I assume that agreement or no agreement, our post-war policy stands, though it may be open to us to drop it if the whole post-war situation turns out to be completely different."[73]

What Linlithgow believed about the future is given in Attlee's memorandum to the War Cabinet. Referring to the telegram of the Viceroy he points out : "His mental attitude is expressed in paragraph 8 when he talks of regaining lost ground after the war. He is obviously thinking in terms of making minor concessions while resting on the *status quo*."[74]

In paragraph 14 of the same telegram the Viceroy disclosed his view on India. He said : "India and Burma have no natural association with the Empire, from which they are alien by race, history and religion, and for which neither of them has any natural affection, and both are in the Empire because they are conquered countries which have been brought there by force, kept there by our control, and which hitherto it has suited to remain under our protection."[75]

Linlithgow confidentially noted : "I am myself now quite sure that self-government is incompatible with unity."[76] He told Durga Das just before his departure from India : "India could not hope to become free for another fifty years. This country was new to Parliamentary institutions and would require a large leavening of British officials and Europeans to ensure their successful functioning. With the advent of air-conditioning, it was now possible for Britain to settle down in India permanently in areas like Dehra Dun, and when there were some six millions of them to buttress a domestic administration India might expect to make substantial progress towards self-government."[77]

Notwithstanding this blowing hot and cold about the political future of India, it did not appear possible that the ideas set forth in the Declaration could be wholly reversed. The Government had at least theoretically accepted the all-Indian composition of the Executive Council—minus the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. Secondly

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[73] *Ibid.*, p. 595. Amery to the Marquess of Linlithgow, March 31, 1942.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 112.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 111. (War Cabinet paper, W.P. 42) -59. The Indian Political Situation, Memorandum by Lord Privy Seal (Attlee), February 2, 1942.

[76] Ibid., p. 633.

[77] Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After*, p. 208.

it had pledged itself to consent to and implement the constitution framed by the Indian constitution-making body elected by the members of the Provincial Assemblies and representatives of States. Thirdly it had given a commitment to the Muslim community for seceding from the Indian Union and establishing Pakistan.

The political future of India was, however, a post-war concern. But what Government had to face was the living present. Even before the Cripps mission had arrived Linlithgow was consulting Amery about the Indian situation. The Japanese aggression and the unprepared condition of India for war were causing grave anxiety to Government. The continuous advance and brilliant victories of the enemy on land and sea had shaken the confidence of the Indian people in Britain's capability and power to save India from invasion, with the result that pro-Japanese feelings were growing.

The economic strains—the inevitable consequence of war, the shortages in consumer goods—*e.g.* food, and rise in prices, were producing widespread discontent. The influx of the refugees from Burma who brought with them tales of British incompetence and of British discriminatory treatment between the White and the Brown roused race bitterness, and the panicky measures like requisitioning and impounding of river craft, combined to imperil internal order.

Besides, at the moment, the political sky was tumultuous with flashes of lightning and roars of thunder. The Congress was threatening to resort to direct action on a mass scale. The Muslim League was on tenterhooks, apprehensive of Congress success and doubtful of British firmness. A spark could lead to an explosion in the magazine surcharged with inflammable material.

In these circumstances with the enemy knocking at the gate there could be no weak-kneed complacency. Of the two alternatives, the one to secure the cooperation of the political leaders for ensuring a calm atmosphere, did not commend itself to the Viceroy and the War Cabinet, for they were not prepared to pay the price demanded. The other was to pluck the nettle and crush it.

The experience of previous movements had prepared the Government for dealing with any new manifestation. Even before the Cripps interlude had commenced the apparatus was being fashioned. A suggestion that the entire High Command should be pounced upon in one swoop and interned in an African colony was mooted, but was ultimately abandoned. The headless and leaderless crowd might create trouble, but the Government possessed sufficient power to smash it and restore order.

Apart from the Congress, the Government relied upon the loyalty of the minorities—the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes, the cooperation of the Princes, and the support of the Moderates whose detestation

of civil disobedience overcame their dislike of government policy. By offering membership in the Executive Council, the National Defence Council, the Imperial Defence Council, etc., it was possible to satisfy the demand for the cooperation of Indians in important bodies.

There was then the weapon of propaganda which could be used to neutralise the sympathies of sections of people abroad and in India who favoured the cause of democracy and freedom for India. In India the independent newspapers could be restrained by laws and regulations restricting freedom, and the loyal press could be encouraged by the exercise of patronage. Then the Government and its vast machinery could be mobilized by instruction from the Centre.

For publicity abroad one sounding board was the Parliament whose platform afforded ample opportunity to the British politicians to propagate their views throughout the world. The British embassy in Washington served as the distributing centre for the British point of view among the people of America and the representatives of other countries accredited to the United States Government staying in the capital.

On return to England Cripps opened his campaign to defame the Congress with a broadcast addressed to the Americans for whose satisfaction he had undertaken his mission. He told them, "We offered representative Indian political leaders, immediate office in the Viceroy's Executive Council a body of ministers like those who advise your (American) President."[78] Having regaled them with a clever but entirely false suggestion which skilfully suppressed the truth he went on to speak about the intentions and motives of the Congress whose friend he pretended to be, *viz.*, that the Congress majority wanted to tyrannize over the minorities, that Gandhiji induced the Congress Working Committee to reject his generous offer.

On April 28, Cripps opened the debate on his mission to India in the House of Commons. His speech was cool and clever and avoided strong or recriminatory words and phrases. He made out a case defending the honesty of British motives and the sincerity of purpose of the Government. He attributed the failure of the mission to the existence of a number of difficulties. Among them were, (1) the involvement of Government in the war, (2) the propaganda of the Axis powers producing a defeatist atmosphere, (3) the growth of communal antagonism, and the conflicting demands of the Parties and communities, and (4) the objection of the Congress—primarily to the first part of the Declaration and to the second part about the form and character of the Executive Council and the position of the Defence Member in it.

[78] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 332-33.

As the Congress had not laid much emphasis upon the first part, Cripps' opinion was that "none of these differences would have been decisive of a negative result, for all the parties would have prepared to cooperate upon the immediate situation" provided their demands relating to this part were satisfied. Therefore the success of the mission depended upon the solution of the two questions relating to (1) the form of the temporary Government and (2) Defence, Concerning the first Cripps averred, "I had from the outset made it clear to those whom I saw that it was not possible to make any constitutional change, except of the most insignificant kind, prior to the new constitution coming into operation." With regard to Defence he pointed out that as numerous aspects of Defence such as Civil Defence, Defence Communications, Labour, etc. were already in the hands of the Indian member of the Viceroy's Council, it was impossible for the British Government to go further with safety, and no risk could be taken at such a moment on so vital and immediate a matter as the defence of India. He added, "Moreover I do not believe that the minorities . . . would have consented at this stage to any further devolution of Defence responsibilities."[79]

He repeated the argument against the transformtion of the Executive Council which he had first advanced at Delhi. It was because the Congress insisted upon this impossible demand that the negotiations finally broke down.

In winding up the debate Amery, Secretary of State for India, dealt with the problems of Indian unity, and national government. He repeated his previous statement in favour of unity—in order to present a common front to the outside world; but rejected the idea of national government because such a government would have been irresponsible and utterly unacceptable to the Muslims and other minorities. He had the temerity to chide the Indian leaders for not moving one step to meet each other without Cripps or in his presence.

After paying a rich tribute to the Viceroy and his Executive Council he lavished praise on the service rendered by the Lord Privy Seal.

The speakers in the House of Lords on Cripps mission, dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the Commoners' remarks.

The Parliamentary debate was a valiant exercise in projecting the curious paradox that while Great Britain was anxious to lay down the burden of empire and entrust India with independence, the Congress leaders, especially Gandhiji, were so blind as to fail to recognise what was in their own interest and so crazy as to reject the generous British offer. Although because of the cussedness of the Congress the opportunity for settlement was lost, both Amery and Churchill gave repeated assurances that the proposals remained in Force in all their scope and integrity.

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[79] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, Vol. I, pp. 262-63.

CHAPTER NINE

SPONTANEOUS REVOLUTION

I. Congress Controverts Cripps' Allegations

The abrupt closure of the negotiations by Cripps shocked the Congress leaders. But his letter to Azad, his broadcast, which blamed the Congress leaders for misrepresenting his views on defence and national government, his accusation of changing the ground for rejecting the offer and for weakly accepting the advice of Gandhiji almost against their own convictions, cut them to the quick. In their minds the image of Cripps was greatly tarnished. They had looked upon him as straightforward, independent, radical-minded, well-wisher of India and a friend of Congressmen, but the conduct of his mission disillusioned them. He was the advocate of proposals which did not at all meet the demands of the Congress. In his interviews and press conferences he used language which meant something which he later denied. He doubted the independence of their judgment and struck a pose of injured innocence.

Jawaharlal Nehru, his best Indian friend, was so disappointed that he confessed, "It is sad beyond measure that a man like Cripps should allow himself to become the devil's advocate."[1]

Gandhiji's fine sense of moral values and gentlemanly conduct was outraged by Cripps' tergiversation and British politicians' falsehoods regarding his actions. His principles, however, negated angry retort, or replying untruth with untruth. He took refuge in the inner recesses of his heart to find a way to relieve his anguish.

Cripps in office, Cripps as the emissary of the War Cabinet, was found to be quite a different person from the free lance Cripps of the Labour Party and a fighter for advanced socialist principles. In the new capacity he behaved as an unscrupulous diplomat and a cunning lawyer speaking to the brief of his client.

He blamed the Congress for playing a destructive role by demanding a change in the Constitution during the war and proposing a defence set-up which would not only adversely affect the conduct of the war but would be unacceptable to the minorities. He accused them of manoeuvring to obtain control of the Government machinery in order to establish in India an irresponsible oligarchic Congress rule

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[1] *National Herald, July* 30, 1942, cited by Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Part II, p. 288.

which would tyrannize over the minorities. He suspected Gandhiji of being a defeatist who wanted to treat with the Japanese to secure India's freedom, and regarded him as a faddist and a pacifist who dissuaded the Congress Working Committee from accepting the Cabinet offer.

The accusations were fantastic. The Congress did not demand the amendment of the Constitution because so far as the long term scheme, which required Parliamentary legislation, was concerned, the Congress itself refrained from considering it in the conditions then prevailing. With regard to the interim government Cripps himself had suggested the change of the Executive Council by convention into a Cabinet.

The Congress leaders pointed out that the British Government had not been deterred by war from proposing a revolutionary change in the Constitution. It was prepared to form a union of UK and France. Others drew attention to the constitutional changes, like boundaries of constituencies, distribution of seats, proportional representation, and cost of elections which were enacted during the war. The appointment of a Defence Member was only a matter of trusting Indians to organise defence and to resist the Japanese, but trust was completely lacking in the ability as well as the reliability of Indians.

The charge that the Congress intended to obtain control in order to perpetuate its rule to the exclusion or detriment of the minorities' interests was trumped up in order to frighten the Muslims and others. The Congress had solemnly avowed that its aims were national and not communal, that it was prepared to form a mixed cabinet, provide safeguards and furnish guarantees for the rights of the minorities in the very framework of the Constitution, because it realized that a discontented powerful minority was a danger to the state.[2] The one demand of the Muslim League which it questioned was that of the partition of India. The doubt was based partly on sentiment, but also on the belief that the Muslims on the whole did not favour it. Partition on the basis of religion appeared like reversion to the medieval ideology which implied rejection of ideas of nationalism, freedom and progress.

Doubts about the desirability of establishing Pakistan, did not prevent the Congress Working Committee from accepting in its resolution of April 10, the principle of local option or provincial non-accession in these words:

"The Congress has been wedded to Indian freedom and unity and break in that unity, especially in the modern world when people's minds inevitably think in terms of ever larger federations, would be injurious to all concerned and exceedingly painful to contemplate.

[2] See Azad's letter to Cripps, April 11, 1942, Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 744.

Nevertheless the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will."[3]

It was alleged that the real aim of the Congress was to establish its own supremacy in government in order to keep the minorities under its domination. How false the allegation was is proved by the statement which Gandhiji made on the morrow of Cripps' departure from India, viz., on April 13. He said: "Attainment of independence is an impossibility till we have solved the communal tangle. . . . How to tackle the problem is another question. There are two ways of solving what has almost become insoluble. The one is the royal way of non-violence, and the other of violence. In the first way, the formal consent or cooperation of the other party is unnecessary. If there is a dispute between two boys over the ownership of an apple, the non-violent way is to leave the apple for the other party to take, the latter well knowing that it would mean non-cooperation on the surrendering party's part."[4]

At the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay on August 8, Gandhiji gave a note to a common friend to the effect that the offer made by the Congress President to the British, that they might transfer authority to any community, was not rhetorical but was seriously meant.[5] Gandhiji's note was as follows:

"With reference to your letter giving me the purport of your conversations today with the Qaid-i-Azam, I wish to say in as clear language as possible that when in a *Harijan* article, I reproduced Maulana Azad's published offer to the Muslim League, I meant it to be a serious offer in every sense of the term. Let me explain it again for your edification. Provided the Muslim League cooperated fully with the Congress demand for immediate independence without the slightest reservation . . . the Congress will have no objection to the British Government transferring all the powers it today exercises to the Muslim League on behalf of the whole of India, including the so-called Indian India. And the Congress will not only not obstruct any Government that the Muslim League may form on behalf of the people, but will even join the Government in rearing the machinery of the free State. This is meant in all seriousness and sincerity."[6]

To ascribe to Gandhiji the attitude of a defeatist was quite wrong. Gandhiji was an optimist by nature, and his belief in the triumph of right was unshakeable. Between the two parties in the war he had no doubt that the cause of the allied nations—UK, USA, France, above

[3] Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 62.
[4] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 74.
[5] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 346.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

all of Russia and China, was just, and he ardently desired its success. So far as Britain was concerned he was even sentimentally attached to its people and would not even in thought wish them ill. What, however, he denounced openly and without reserve, was Britain's imperialist role. For him British imperialism was the same kind of aggressive domination over the peoples of Asia and Africa, as the aggression of Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese militarists. British imperialists of all parties—Conservative, Liberal and Labour, deluded themselves to look upon an enemy of imperialism as an enemy of Britain desirous of its downfall.

Gandhiji also held that the Japanese had entered the war against Britain because they were envious of the British Empire and wanted its destruction, otherwise they had no reason to invade India. It was, therefore, possible for India to dissuade them from attacking India if the British voluntarily liquidated their empire in India. But in case the Japanese did not desist from their plans, two courses were open—(1) the allied forces could remain in India to resist the Japanese with Indian consent, (2) India would offer total non-violent non-cooperation on the widest scale to render Japanese occupation impossible.

Gandhiji's role during the negotiations between the Congress and Cripps was travestied by British spokesmen. The fact is Gandhiji was reluctant to see Cripps at all. But when pressed he consented, travelled to Delhi, and met him on March 27. Cripps showed him the Draft Declaration which he immediately rejected and even asked Cripps not to publish it and return home. On April 4 Gandhiji left Delhi and did not return during Cripps' stay. Meanwhile the Congress Working Committee continued to negotiate and its hopes for a settlement were quite bright till the morning of April 9. Then in the evening Azad met Cripps and found to his amazement that the picture had entirely changed and the promise of Cabinet government revoked on the ground that the matter lay within the personal jurisdiction of the Viceroy and required his agreement. This indeed was nothing but a pretext to shift the responsibility for refusal to the Viceroy—an agent of His Majesty's Government under the direction and control of the Secretary of State, and therefore bound by the decisions of the Cabinet.

The reversal of the attitude of Cripps was bound to evoke a negative reaction from the Congress Working Committee and in the meeting on the morning of April 10 it expressed its inability to accept the proposals put forward on behalf of the British War Cabinet. Gandhiji did not come into the picture at all. Azad writes in his book: "Gandhiji's views on the subject of participation in any war were well known and it would be entirely untrue to suggest that the Working Committee's decisions were in any way influenced by those views.

"Gandhiji made it clear to the Working Committee that we were perfectly free to come to our own decisions on the merit of the proposals. He did not want to participate even in the earlier sittings of the Working Committee and it was only because of my insistence that he agreed to stay on for several days. Eventually he felt that he could not stay any longer and all my persuasion failed to move him."[7]

On April 12 Cripps wended his way home to lead a propaganda campaign in favour of the British offer and against the Congress for its rejection.

The offer was empty of any substance of independence. The equivocal manner of its presentation, and the propaganda of misrepresentation with the deliberate purpose of turning world opinion against the Congress and maligning Gandhiji, caused widespread disillusionment and intense indignation. Gandhiji, the main target of the propaganda, gave expression to his feelings in these words: "All the manufactured criticism that I find being made today is sheer tomfoolery, meant to overawe me and to demoralize the Congress ranks. It is a foul game, they do not know the fire that is raging in my breast."[8]

II. Gandhiji Resolves on Non-cooperation

The fuel that fed this fire was supplied not only by the hypocrisy of the Allies led by Britain, but from many other sources. The war situation was discouraging in the summer of 1942. After the fall of Singapore on February 15, of Rangoon on March 7, and of the Andamans on March 12, the seas round India were dominated by the Japanese. While Cripps was negotiating in Delhi, Japanese bombs fell on Trincomalee, Cocanada and Vizagapatam. The Government of Madras removed its offices into the interior, and panic spread all along the eastern coast from Trincomalee to Calcutta.[9]

There was talk of the evacuation of Calcutta which caused a scare and flight of the people from the city. Azad describing the conditions at Calcutta in May says, "I was disturbed to see the deterioration in the situation on all hands. The majority of the people were now convinced that the British would lose the war and some seemed to welcome a Japanese victory. There was great bitterness against the British which at times was so intense that they did not think of the consequence of a Japanese conquest of India."[10]

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[7] Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[8] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 137.

[9] Sir A. Hope, Governor of Madras to Linlithgow, April 18, 1942, in Mansergh and Lumby, op. cit., pp. 800-01; also pp. 298-99.

[10] Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, pp. 71-2.

His information was that the Government expected the Japanese to advance upon Calcutta from Diamond Harbour. Their plan was to abandon the city and if necessary to fall back from Bengal on prepared lines to the west, and to adopt the scorched-earth policy—blowing up bridges, and destroying factories and industrial installations like Jamshedpur.[11]

The losses in shipping created scarcity of goods, shortage of food. The rise in prices added to the miseries of half-starved masses.

The occupation of Malaya and Burma led to the flight of Indians and Europeans through Burma to India. Separate arrangements were made for the two races and as usual the Indians were discriminated against. Even the roads by which they marched were different, to become known as the black and the white roads. Naturally the Indian refugees were bitter about the intolerably inhuman treatment meted out to them at the places from which they were evacuated and on the journey. The tales of their sufferings aggravated anti-British feelings. "The cup of India's degradation seemed to be overflowing" was the comment of the General Secretaries of the Indian National Congress.

For the sensitive mind of Gandhiji, which reacted powerfully to the sufferings of the people in distress, the pain was almost unbearable. But his reactions were not like those of ordinary men. He would not respond to hypocrisy and untruth by anger and violence. The hypocrisy of the Allies consisted in fighting a war ostensibly for freedom and democracy and refusing the application of these principles to the peoples subject to them. But immorality and falsehood could not be corrected except by morality and truth. Error should be remedied by reason and not by force.

While Gandhiji was searching his soul to find a remedy, the Congress leaders in distress were also groping for a solution. But the leaders spoke in different voices.

Jawaharlal Nehru was anxious, before Cripps' last minute reversal, to find a way out and make India function effectively for defence and make the war a popular concern. According to Azad, "he felt genuine grief that India should not be fighting by the side of the democracies". There was a conflict in his mind and therefore "he was not sure of his position."

Azad was of opinion that the Congress should organize the people to resist the Japanese aggression, and was convinced that a non-violent movement could not be launched or carried out in the existing circumstances.

Gandhiji's followers depended upon the directions of the leader, who thought in terms of non-violence.

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

crisis was due to the fact that Britain appeared before the world in the glittering but false trappings of imperialism. If it could discard them and project its true personality as the harbinger of liberty and pioneer of parliamentary government, the contradiction between reality and appearance would disappear. India's goodwill would be won and the defeat of the enemies—moral and physical, guaranteed. At the end of the letter he said, "My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk that they did in Singapore, Malaya and Burma. The act would mean courage of a high order, confession of human limitations, and right doing by India."[14]

On April 26, he repeated in an article in *Harijan*, "to India, her real safety and of Britain too lie in orderly and timely British withdrawal from India."[15] When the All-India Congress Committee met at Allahabad from April 29 to May 2 he advised them to demand the withdrawal of the British and to resolve to resist the Japanese with non-violent non-cooperation.

The acceptance of his advice by the Committee naturally laid on Gandhiji the grave responsibility of resuming the lead of the Congress. He said, "I feel, therefore, that I must devote the whole of my energy to the realization of the supreme act."[16] In order to explain the implication of "Quit India" he filled the columns of *Harijan* in elaborating the programme and answering the questions of the enquirers.

He dealt with problems like the Japanese invasion. There were two alternatives. Either the withdrawal of the British would leave them no excuse to invade India, for their enemy was the British Empire and not India. If, however, instead of leaving India alone they chose to subjugate her, then "they will find that they have to hold more than they can in their iron hoop."[17]

He repudiated the idea of freeing India with the help of Japanese. He could not contemplate with equanimity their designs upon India, because if they were well-intentioned, he asked, what had China done to deserve the devastation they had wrought there?

Regarding Britain's relations with India he held, "Britain may, therefore, be said to be at perpetual war with India, which she holds by right of conquest and through an army of occupation. How does India profit by this enforced participation in Britain's war?"[18] To the question to whom the British are to entrust the administration, he

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14 Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, (1962 ed.) p. 75.
15 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
18 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

replied, "Under my proposal, they have to leave India in God's hands—but in the modern parlance, to anarchy, and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities. From these, a true India will rise in the place of the false one we see."[19] Anarchy was in any case preferable to slavery.

Concerning anarchy he pointed out that India was living in a state of ordered anarchy already, as the British rule did not promote the welfare of the people. If their organised anarchy was replaced by lawlessness it would not matter. India ought to risk it.

While he felt no sympathy for the British he did not believe that the British were likely to be defeated. But his conjecture was that the war was not likely to end in a decisive victory for any party, and he was sure "whether Britain wins or loses, imperialism has to die."[20] He was, however, a passionate lover of freedom and would do nothing which would involve India in the position of changing masters. He told Louis Fischer that this meant that Britain, America and other countries could keep their armies in India and use Indian territory as a base for military operations, for instance, operate railways for transport.[21]

The British, however, had no faith in Indian independence, and could not be convinced by reasoning or by showing them justice and feasibility of the proposal for national government. "They are impressed by action, and it is action that we must take now."[22] The action, of course, would be non-violent, for example, non-payment of taxes, making salt, seizing of land.

"But this, said Fischer, might lead to violent resistance". Replied Gandhiji, "There may be fifteen days of chaos, but I think we could soon bring that under control."[23]

At the end of the talk with Fischer, Gandhiji summed up his attitude thus:

"One thing and only one thing for me is solid and certain. This unnatural prostration of a great nation—it is neither 'nations' nor 'peoples'—must cease, if the victory of the allies is to be ensured. They lack moral basis. They have no right to talk of human liberty and all else, unless they have washed their hands clean of the pollution. ... Then and not till then, will they be fighting for a new order."[24]

In an article in *Harijan* he explained that the proposal for withdrawal did not admit of negotiations. Either it was accepted or rejected.

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 94. Interview with Louis Fischer.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

In case it was accepted the whole landscape would change, then many matters would have to be considered, *e.g.*, the method of withdrawal, immediate arrangements for war, future relations of India and Britain, and also the formation of the provisional government and the share of parties and communities in the administration, etc.

But if they did not do the right thing, two American journalists enquired, what then his next move would be. He replied: "It will be a move which will be felt by the whole world. It may not interfere with the movement of British troops, but it is sure to engage the British attention. . . . I want unadulterated independence. If the military activity serves but to strengthen the stranglehold I must resist that too."[25]

With his usual candour Gandhiji had expounded his views on the situation and discussed his plan of action. He had come to know that the Government with its customary disregard of moral issues and its short-sighted predilection to sacrifice the future good and the permanent interest to what was needed immediately, had started preparations to crush any movement which the Congress might launch.

The Congress was already feeling impatient for action which would offer a suitable reply to the provocative and lying speeches of Cripps, Amery and others in and outside Parliament. Now that the Government was clearing the decks and concerting ruthless measures of disrupting Congress plans and suppressing its activities, however non-violent, it was time to take decisions.

But in order to remove the possibility of misunderstanding he wrote letters to Chiang Kai-Shek and Roosevelt explaining the demand for immediate freedom but assuring that the allied troops could remain in India to fight the Japanese. He told them he had no desire to embarrass or hamper the Allies in the prosecution of war, in fact he believed that if his proposal was accepted and India became free, it would become a real and most powerful ally and thus assure the victory of the United Nations.

In an atmosphere made tense by the declarations of Gandhiji on the one side, and the threats of the Government, on the other, the Congress Working Committee met on July 6. All the members shared the same anxieties about the future of India and the same emotions of indignation against unjust British policies, of helplessness on account of denial to organise resistance against impending invasion, and of frustration for inability either to help China or to sustain the morale of their fellow-countrymen harassed by all kinds of troubles, or to resolve the conflicts within.

Keen yearning for freedom and profound concern for the people

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-09.

on the Indian side met with stark opposition from the side of Britain, and tempers were ruffled. Gandhiji felt a fire raging in his breast and it enveloped other members in its flames. In these conditions the Congress Working Committee met and discussed for many days the situation—the malady and its cure.

On July 14, the epic debate was over and the fateful resolution was approved. It gave a brief account of the efforts of the Congress to convince the British rulers of the necessity of making India free not only in the interests of India but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, militarism and other forms of imperialism and the aggression of one nation over another. It also referred to the Congress endeavours to bring about the solution of the communal tangle which required for their success the ending of foreign domination. It affirmed that the Congress had no desire to embarrass the Allied Powers in the prosecution of the war or in any way to encourage aggression on India.

Then it appealed to Britain to withdraw its rule from India with goodwill, so that a provisional Government might be established which would cooperate with the United Nations in resisting aggression. "Should, however, this appeal fail, the Congress cannot view without the greatest apprehension the continuation of the present state of affairs. ... The Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920. ... Such a wide-spread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji."[26]

III. Government's Plan for Suppression

Between July 14, when the Congress Working Committee made its appeal to Government and intimated its decision that in case of rejection it would have no alternative but to resort to civil disobedience, and August 7 which was fixed as the date for the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, many things happened.

The response of the Government to the appeal was entirely negative. It had decided that nothing concerning constitutional matters would be done as long as the war lasted. Again it had determined that it would not allow any political movement to distract its attention from the pursuit of the war. It looked upon the Congress demands as ill-timed and tantamount to an invitation to the enemy to extend his operations towards India. It denied any moral justification to India's claim for independence. It looked upon the Congress organisation led by Gandhiji as the enemy of the Government which deserved no

[26] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 341-42.

consideration. It had waited for two long years to crush the Congress, now the long awaited opportunity had presented itself.[27] It, therefore, started to plan for a swift and thorough suppression of the Congress movement.

The Government was confirmed in its resolve to take drastic action because it was alarmed by the writings of Gandhiji, the resolutions of the All-India Congress Committee (April–May 1942), and the Congress Working Committee of July 14. Its apprehensions were increased by the growing discontent among the people and the rising tide of doubt in Britain's capability to defend India. It also realized that the British propaganda abroad was not succeeding as much as it would wish either in the United States of America or China. There was, for instance, dissatisfaction in America against the British Government's attitude towards the Grady report, which had recommended the development of war industries in India with the promise of American aid.

But the Government felt it was concerned only with the war and with the maintenance of law and order inside the country. It had issued instructions to provincial governments for a fortnightly report on trends of public opinion and of political activities.

The Government was encouraged in its resolve to suppress the Congress by the statement of Jinnah in which he observed:

"The latest decision of the Congress Working Committee on July 14, 1942, resolving to launch a mass movement if the British do not withdraw from India is the culminating point in the policy and programme of Mr. Gandhi and his Hindu Congress of blackmailing the British and coercing them to concede a system of government and transfer power to that government which would establish a Hindu Raj immediately under the aegis of the British bayonets, thereby throwing the Muslims and other minorities and interests at the mercy of the Congress Raj."[28]

The opinions expressed by Savarkar and other Mahasabha leaders calling on their followers to give no active support to the Congress policy, and the appeal of Sapru and Sastri—the Liberal party leaders, for the abandonment of the civil disobedience movement because it was prejudicial to best interests of the country, confirmed the Government that its ision had wide support in India.

Immediately after July 14 resolution of the Congress Working Committee, Puckle, Director-General of Information, Government of India, issued on July 17, a circular to the Chief Secretaries of all the local governments to mobilise public opinion against the Congress

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[27] See Linlithgow's secret letter of August 8, 1940 to all Governors in Home Dept. Pol. (I), File No. 6/13/40; also Mansergh and Lumby, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. II, pp. 534-35.

[28] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 141.

resolution, which he described as a party manifesto, opposed by other communities and organisations. He made a number of suggestions for publishing cartoons and posters, among which one was to show Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, each with microphones saying, "I vote for the Congress Resolution."

Then on August 8 the Government of India issued a resolution which alleged that the Congress was preparing for unlawful, dangerous and violent activities directed to the interruption of communications and public utility services, the organisation of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of Government servants and interference with Defence measures, including recruitment.

Thus by August 8 both, on the plain of propaganda and of action, the Government was ready with its measures to deal an effective blow to the Congress.

In an atmosphere electrified with forebodings of struggle, conflict and call of self-dedication and sacrifice, the All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay on August 7, 1942. It took into consideration the motion of July 14 and adopted a long resolution, which gave the justification for asking the British to quit India and explained its implications. It formulated the lineaments of the constitution of the Provisional Government, its composition and its aims, it pointed out the solution of the communal problem and declared India's aspirations for world peace and amity.

The operative part of the resolution was: "The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle."[29]

The Committee placed Gandhiji in command of the movement, but warned that a time might come when the Congress would be unable to issue instructions for people's guidance. "When this happens every man and woman, who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of general instructions issued."

It solemnly declared that the transfer of power which the Congress was seeking "will belong to the whole of India", as it had no intention of gaining power for the Congress.

Gandhiji speaking before and after the resolution in exhorting the people to join the movement laid stress upon a number of things:

(a) Forget the differences between the Hindus and Muslims, and think of yourselves as Indians only.

[29] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 151.

(b) Our quarrel is not with the British people, we fight their imperialism, we must purge ourselves of hatred.
(c) In Satyagraha there is no place for fraud, or any kind of untruth.
(d) Feel that from today you are a free man and not a dependant.
(e) Do or Die. Either free India or die in the attempt.[30]

He gave advice to the journalists, the princes, Government servants, soldiers, and students, regarding their duty towards the movement. He told the Government that the passing of the resolution did not mean that the actual struggle was going to commence immediately. He proposed to meet the Viceroy first and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. Only after that he would formulate his plans and programme.

He declared what the voice of his conscience was impelling him to do so. It told him: "You have to stand against the whole world, although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare the world in the face, although the world may look at you with bloodshot eyes. Do not fear. Trust that little thing which resides in the heart. It says, "Forsake friends, wife and all; but testify to that for which you have lived, and for which you have to die."[31]

On the day preceding the passing of the resolution Gandhiji placed before the Working Committee a draft of instructions for the guidance of the participants in the civil disobedience movement. The instructions were that on a fixed day a *Hartal* (closure of business) would be observed together with a 24-hour fast and prayers. But no shop-owner would be coerced to close his shop. On the *Hartal* day there would be held meetings in the villages, processions would be taken out and the objects of Satyagraha explained. The civil disobedience would be directed against the salt tax and in favour of illegal manufacture of salt. Land tax would be refused. In Zamindari areas if the Zamindar made a common cause with the ryot his portion of the revenue would be paid, but the Government's share withheld. If, on the other hand, the Zamindar took the side of the Government no tax should be paid to him. Excesses by the Government should not be tolerated.

On the question of who should join, it was suggested that all Indians whether in the Congress organisation or not who desired freedom for the whole of India and fully believed in the weapon of truth and non-violence for the purpose of the struggle, would be expected to join. No one should undertake Satyagraha who harboured hatred or ill will in his heart against any Indian or Englishman.

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 161.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Those employed in Government offices, Government factories, Railways, Post Offices, etc., were not to join the movement till the occasion arose for their participation. But the members of the legislatures and municipalities and other public bodies should come out. All students reading in institutions conducted or controlled by the Government should leave these institutions. Those who were above sixteen years of age should join the Satyagraha. But there should be no coercion in this matter.

The draft was expected to be discussed on the next day, *viz.*, August 9, and besides the items enumerated other matters were to be considered. The meeting, however, did not take place and no formally sanctioned programme could be issued.[32]

IV. Government Measures against the Congress

The Government was in no doubt about the intentions of the Congress and months ahead had made all necessary arrangements for dealing with the expected developments. It did not want to let the grass grow under its feet. It would not allow any time to the movement to start and gather momentum. In war, surprise, offence and first strike are the keys to success, and the Government desirous of a speedy defeat of the Congress did not hesitate to make use of this strategy. Not only did it strike at once, it struck as heavy and crushing a blow as lay within its power unrestrained by any considerations of law, justice or morals. If the existing laws were not adequate new laws and ordinances or lawless laws were promulgated, if established processes of justice stood in the way recourse was had to substitute for them arbitrary forms. According to Puckle's circular for the Government no question of moral principles was involved, the question at issue was one of expediency.

The first blow fell with the weight and suddenness of an avalanche. Early morning on Sunday August 9 the Police descended on the Birla House where Gandhiji and his companions were staying. They presented the warrant of his arrest and gave him half an hour to prepare for his departure. With his Secretary Mahadeo Desai, his wife Kasturba and Mrs. Naidu, he was taken to the Aga Khan Palace at Poona.

Simultaneously all the members of the Working Committee in Bombay were taken into custody, and immured in the old fort at Ahmednagar. Then arrests took place all over India and a large number of Congressmen were thrown into prison. Thus the organi-

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[32] Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI (1953), pp. 212-14.

sation was left without any leaders—all-India, provincial, district, taluka and town, even before the movement had started or a programme of action adopted, the Government had rushed in. What followed cannot be dignified with the name of a movement, for it was an outburst of blind anger—unorganised, unprepared and undirected, of a harassed and distracted people. The leaderless masses were moved hither and thither swayed by a multiplicity of influence—the terrorists, the revolutionists, the Forward Bloc of Subhas Bose who had fled to Berlin, the Socialist followers of Jai Prakash Narayan who were in the Congress but were opposed to non-violence, and a number of nondescript anti-social elements, looking for opportunities for mischief. The one force which ought to have guided them along the path of non-violent struggle had been eliminated by the action of Government.

The cruel and atrocious reprisals which the impatient Government rained over the whole country in the vain hope of a quick subsidence of disturbances turned out to be a miscalculation.

The banning of all Congress Committees and jailing of almost all Congressmen of importance surprised and shocked people all over India. These measures naturally provoked an immediate reaction. On August 9 immediately on the spread of the news demonstrations, processions and gatherings of people took place in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Poona. These were followed by similar activities in Delhi and other towns of the north. *Hartals*, picketings, and acts of disobedience and defiance followed from one end of the country to the other.

The behaviour of the Government towards these manifestations was utterly callous and ruthless. The mobs were dispersed by lathi charges, beatings, kicking, harassment and indignities of all kinds, which maddened the crowds and drove them to vengeance and violence. Soon the vicious circle was established—deeds of violence, barbarous punishments, revengeful sabotage, more cruel punitive measures.

The spirit of rebellion against authority and the determination to put an end to the tyrannical Government led to all kinds of excesses of which the system of communication— post offices, telegraphs, telephones and the network of railways, were the main targets. The instruments of administration— the police and the magistracy were equally hated and mercilessly attacked. Endeavours were made—sporadic, unconnected and unorganised, to paralyse local administration, destroy or damage public property, burn and plunder police stations, post and telegraph offices, railway stations, stores, to break up railway lines, blow up bridges and dig up roads.

Bihar with the exception of its southern districts and eastern Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) were the main centres of these lawless activi-

ties in an intense form.[33] The district of Ballia excelled all others in U.P. The people opened the jail and one of the prisoners took the lead, captured the administration, cut off communications and for a few days maintained Panchayat Raj.

In Bengal the district of Midnapore defied British rule. In Tamluk a national government was installed with all the paraphernalia of administration. The district was subjected to all the violent activities relative to police, railways, roads, etc.

In the Central Provinces two places were specially affected—Ashti and Chimur, and in the Madras Province the railway line between Renugunta and Bezwada, a distance of about 130 miles was uprooted. In the Bombay Province large strikes in mills and factories created much disturbance.

The railways suffered a large amount of loss. Dislocation occurred especially in the Bengal North Western, East Indian and Madras and Southern Mahratta Railways.[34]

In the destruction of railway instruments and apparatus much technical knowledge was shown, and special implements were used. At numerous places telegraph and telephone wires were cut, electric installations destroyed. Places where the Government personnel was meagre were isolated and independent regimes set up. They had to be recovered by armed police supported by the army. For some time the communications between Bengal and the rest of India were interrupted.

Furious mobs not only attacked government buildings, offices, stores, etc., they assaulted officials, injured many and killed some.

On the other side, the retaliatory action perpetrated by Government—mainly police aided by the army, exceeded all limits. Every canon of morality, decency and law was violated in the name of law and order. Mobs were dispersed with lathi charge, by rifle, pistol, and occasionally machine-gun fire from air. Men were mercilessly flogged and beaten; undertrials were tortured—not allowed to sleep, cross-examined for hours throughout day and night, kept hungry and thirsty, and humiliated. Women were stripped, assaulted, raped; even children were not spared. In the villages numerous houses were razed to the ground, many actually burnt. People were tied to trees and

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[33] For Disturbances in Bihar see the report of Chief Secretary Y. A. Godole dated September 17, 1942, in Home Dept. Pol. (I), File No. 3/34/42. There was complete dislocation of communications; police opened fire 71 times killing 135 persons and wounding 316. Total amount of collective fine came to Rs. 9,78,200.

[34] Home Dept. Pol. (I) File No. 3/26/42 gives the railway position as on September 1, 1942. Sabotage on East Indian Railway was greatest.

beaten, sometimes undressed and whipped. Lathis, short staves, fists and even shoes were used.

Large numbers were thrust into jails without trial. Long terms of imprisonment and harsh—in some cases inhuman, treatment was meted out to them.

One of the most effective form of punitive measures was the imposition of collective fines which were realized with the utmost rigour.

The whole object obviously was to terrorize people, teach them a lesson and efface from their minds all thoughts of defiance.

The open rebellion did not last long. It was at its worst for a few weeks. Then the Government hammer fell. The leaders went underground, but the fire of revolt was not quenched and for months afterwards saboteurs remained busy with their programme of destruction and baiting the administration

Among the agents who played an active role the students were conspicuous. They left their studies and came out of schools and colleges in thousands. Their enthusiasm was irrepressible, their courage in facing police charges with batons and even bullets unflinching. They helped in the organisation of demonstrations. They went out into villages with the message of freedom. Many a bright youngman sacrificed his career, faced the wrath of his parents or guardians, lived in poverty, but stuck bravely to what he believed his country demanded.

It is difficult to take stock of the losses of the Government as well as the people, for the figures were not compiled systematically. In a statement given in a Home Department file the following statistics connected with the disturbances are tabulated for the period ending December 31, 1943 :[35]

A. Government action:		
1. Number of police firings		601
2. Number of casualties, fatal		763
3. Number of casualties inflicted.		1,941
B. People's action		
1. Police stations destroyed or severely damaged.		208
2. Government buildings destroyed or severely damaged.		749
3. Public buildings destroyed or severely damaged.		525
4. Private buildings destroyed or severely damaged.		273
5. Loss to Government	Rs.	27,35,125
6. Loss to other parties	Rs.	30,07,274

[35] Home Dept. Pol. (I) File No. 3/52/43. An earlier statement made by Maxwell to the National Defence Council on September 8, 1942 is given in Home Dept. Pol. (I), File No. 3/26/42.

C. Cases of Sabotage:

1. Number of bomb explosions	664
2. Cases of sabotage to roads	474

D. Government action:

1. Cases in which collective fines imposed.	173
2. Amount of collective fines imposed.	Rs. 90,07,382
3. Number of whipping cases	2,562
4. Number of arrests	9,836
5. Local authorities superseded.	108

E. Railways:

1. Railway stations destroyed or severely damaged. . .	382
2. Cases of serious damage to track after October 1, 1942 .	411
3. Cases of serious damage to rolling stock.	268
4. Derailments and other accidents	66
5. Loss to Railway property	Rs. 52 lacs

F. Post and Telegraph Department

1. Number of offices destroyed or severely damaged. . .	945
2. Cases of destruction or serious damage. . . .	12,286

G. Military action:

1. Number of occasions military fired. . . .	68
2. Number of casualties, fatal	297
3. Number of non-fatal casualties	238
4. Cases of firing from air.	5

It was inevitable that in this orgy of horrors the organised forces of Government should carry the palm over the unguided and unorganised collection of rabble and disorderly crowds driven by passion and mob hysteria. The Congress Radio broadcasts made by Usha Mehta and her friends from Bombay for a few months in 1942, the parallel government set up in Satara district by Nana Patil and others, the rising in Midnapore district were some of the high-lights of the spontaneous revolution. Some technical skill and preparation was shown in destroying railway property and instrumentations, and an instinctive foresight in deranging transport and communications in order to isolate places and establish people's government, otherwise the disturbances though widespread lacked coherence and planning. In a few weeks the peak of the fury had been reached and then a rapid decline began in its public manifestation, and the activity went underground. Secret and sporadic incidents continued for a long time. The Government did not relax its repressive measures until it had satisfied itself fully that there was little chance of the revival of the civil disobedience movement. Then it ordered the release of Gandhiji on May 6, 1944, about 21 months after his arrest, and closed the chapter of events pregnant with important consequences.

V. British Propaganda against the Congress

While the repression was in full swing and India was writhing under the agony of a pitiless bipartite struggle, the world and the World War were taking a new shape. Between August 1942 and May 1944 the war had definitely turned the corner. The Russians had begun rolling back the German hordes. One of the German armies surrendered at Stalingrad by the end of January 1943 and the Russians began the offensive which ultimately drove the enemy out of Russia.

In the September of 1943 the Allied army landed in Italy and in May 1944 advanced northwards, clearing the German troops from the country. In north Africa from the battle on the borders of Egypt the German retreat began. In May Tunisia was freed from Italo-German occupation.

The tide of war had definitely begun to flow in the Allies' favour But in its course the relative position of the allied powers had changed. The two giants—Russia in the east, and USA in the west, were striding forth to crush the Axis, and in their company Britain was dwarfed. It seemed no longer to play the dominating role in world affairs which it had done heretofore. One result of this change in power balance was that it could not deal with its empire as if it was its exclusive concern, and the other powers had no business to pry into imperial affairs.

Britain realized that in order to win the goodwill and approbation of the USA the policies and measures in India must be justified. The Cripps Mission was an exercise in this context.

When the Quit India resolution was adopted by the Congress, the leaders were arrested and disturbances broke out. Then a reign of terror was established, and it became necessary to justify the actions of the Government; more so, because of the American presence in India in connection with their military aid. Indian happenings had a direct bearing on the war and the fortunes of the allied nations. The American President, aware of this, expressed his concern in these affairs, by sending his personal representatives to the country—Johnson at the time of Cripps Mission, and then Phillips who arrived in December 1942 and stayed for nearly five months.

Britain, on its part, made great efforts to influence both the opinion of the American people as well as the Government. Along with the British Ambassador, whose business it was to propagate the British point of view, the Government of India sent special agents to participate in this propaganda.

The American press which was seized of the importance of India had its correspondents in India. They together with a number of

other writers and men of letters kept the American public informed of the Indian events. Some of them were strong advocates of the Indian demand for independence.

Realizing the need of counteracting the spread of pro-Indian opinions the members of His Majesty's Government took the initiative. In the Parliament the Secretary of State, used all the arts of sophistry to convince the world of the British honesty of purpose in promising independence to India after the war, and the unjustified distrust of the Indian nationalist leaders who in order to conceal their inability to overcome their communal differences declined to shoulder the responsibility of government and shifted the blame to the British.

Amery replying to the debate in the Commons on September 11, trained all the guns of his oratory against Gandhiji. One of his allegation was that "under Mr. Gandhi's inspiration, the Congress was steadily swinging towards a policy of direct defiance aimed at paralysing the existing Government of India."[36] Then he charged Gandhiji with threatening to start what "will be the bitterest struggle of my life", for which he could not afford to wait, and "must even at obvious risks ask the people to resist slavery", and suggested that Gandhiji's non-violence was only a smoke-screen behind which was visible the red face of revolution and violence.

After giving an account of the serious cases of sabotage, Amery stated, "The charges are that this attack was specifically planned and in accordance with general directions given by the Congress and in accordance with the directives of a particular provincial committee." According to him it was "a carefully planned scheme of attack not only upon the daily life but indeed on the safety of India. It mainly concentrated on the vital strategic area lying between Eastern India now exposed to Japanese attack and the main body of India as well as the area which would most prejudice the carrying of coal from the mines to the munition factories of India."[37]

On October 8, Amery told the Parliament that "under Mr. Gandhi's autocratic influence (Congress) became a party of revolution. . . .His consistent aim and that of his followers has been. . .to direct subversion at some given moment by the Congress as a result of some upheaval, to which the existing Government of India and Parliament here should surrender."[38]

Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in his usual swash-buckling style which he adopted in speeches on India, condemned the Indian National Congress and asserted:

"Bell, book and candle shall not drive me back,

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[36] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, Vol. II, pp. 348-55. Amery's speech.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 358.

When gold and silver hark me to come on."[39]

In his statement on September 10, 1942, in the House of Commons Churchill insinuated that the disturbances—which he designated as "Congress activities", might have been aided by Japanese fifth column. He sought to defame the Congress and disparage its importance, in these words, "The Indian Congress Party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. ... Outside that party and fundamentally opposed to it are 90 million Muslims in British India, who have their rights of self-expression, 50 million depressed classes or untouchables as they are called because they are supposed to defile their Hindu co-religionists by their presence or by their shadow, and 95 million subjects of the Princes of India with whom we are bound by treaty. In all there are 235 millions in these three large groupings alone out of 390 millions in all India. This takes no account of the large elements among Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in British India who deplore the present policy of the Congress Party."[40]

He added : "The Congress Party has now abandoned the policy in many respects of non-violence which Gandhi has so long inculcated in theory and has come into the open as a revolutionary movement designed to paralyse communications by rail and telegraph and generally to promote disorder, looting of shops, and sporadic attacks upon the Indian police, accompanied from time to time by revolting atrocities—the whole having the intention or at any rate the effect of hampering the defence of India against the Japanese invader who stands on the frontiers of Assam and also upon the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal."[41]

The speech, apart from its malignant hostility towards the Indian National Congress and Gandhiji, shows a complete lack of objective assessment of facts on which a Government ought to base its policies, and therefore furnishes conclusive proof of the utter incompetence of the British politicians to rule India.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Attlee, philosophised like Hamlet :

"To be or not to be : that is the question."

"India must have self-government, but which India ? And is there an India ? And self-government for whom ?"[42]

On the second reading of the India and Burma (Temporary Miscellaneous) Bill, in the House of Commons on October 8, he defended the policy of the Government towards India, regarding its political

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[39] Shakespeare, W., *King John*, iii, 12.

[40] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, Vol. II, p. 344.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 366.

problems and the recent outbreak of lawlessness. He, too, maintained, "Violence was planned and orders were issued for Civil Disobedience. Any one who knows history, knows whenever a Civil Disobedience is started, it always leads to violence."[43]

Concerning the Cripps' offer he repeated Churchill's and Amery's assurances that it had not lapsed, but said, "The essential difficulty of the question... is that it is no good talking about the people of India and thinking thereby you would settle the problem of Indian unity. They might just as well say let Europe be governed by the people of Europe..."

He continued, "Democracy did not mean domination of the whole people by one section. ... The fundamental difficulty we have come up against in all this Indian question is that you cannot get communities to trust each other. It is no good burking the question. It is no good trying to belittle the great Muslim community. And when the people ask what the Muslim people have done, I say that the Muslim people have provided a very large part of the fighting forces. When trouble was raised, the Muslim people did not raise trouble in India."[44]

Then the members of Parliament with the exception of a few unpractical idealists, the great political parties and the vast majority of the Press in concert laid the responsibility for the disorders on Gandhiji and the Congress leaders.

The Labour Party of England recorded its approval of the Government's policy of arrests in the resolution, "that the action taken was a timely and unavoidable precaution."[45]

In India the Government, faced with the critical situation, followed the traditional lines of defence: (1) publicity in justification of Government's measures of repression and condemnation of the Congress for rebellion; (2) strengthening the attachment of loyal elements to Government by appointment to offices; and (3) assuring the loyalty of the Muslims to Government and widening the gulf between the League and the Congress.

The campaign of publicity was opened in the Central Legislature by Home Member Maxwell. In discussing the political situation in the country on September 10, he gave the Government's version of the origin and the incidents of the disturbances. He repeated the same charges against Gandhiji and the Congress as were iterated by Amery in the Parliament in London. In fact the material for the

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 365.

[44] *Ibid.* The speech of Mr. Attlee on October 8, 1942; in the House of Commons.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 351.

dossier of the Secretary of State was supplied by the Government of India, as in their turn the Government of India's facts and conclusions were gathered from Provincial Police and Magistracy initially. Maxwell observed:

"Attempts have been made and will no doubt be made to exonerate the Congress leaders or to represent that recent events are not the outcome of the mass movement sanctioned by the All-India Congress Committee at Bombay. The terms of the resolution which they then passed are such that they can hardly disclaim responsibility for any events that followed it. But apart from that it is impossible to interpret the utterances of the Congress leaders themselves except on the assumption that they knew and approved of what was likely to occur."[46]

The Government of India was on a strong wicket, because it enjoyed the approval of the leaders of the Muslim community, some vocal leaders of the scheduled classes and the moderate politicians for whom direct action and civil disobedience were anathema.

The lead was followed by the Provinces, either through gubernatorial pronouncements or through statements in the Legislatures where they existed.

A more ambitious enterprise was the publication of a pamphlet entitled *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances*, 1942-43, on February 13, 1943, containing an indictment of Gandhiji and the Congress. The date is remarkable because it was about this time that Gandhiji undertook a three-week fast in protest against the mean motives attributed to him. The pamphlet carried a preface signed by Tottenham, Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department. It was a bold but unavailing attempt to prove its thesis by quoting and misquoting, turning and twisting the texts culled from the speeches and writings of Gandhiji and from the resolutions of the Congress Working Committee, reading between the lines and suggesting diabolical intent to their words, phrases and sentences. All those who participated in the disturbances were assumed to be Gandhian Congressmen. Thousands who had been pushed into prisons without trial were presumed to be resisters and rebels without evidence and on mere suspicion.

The pamphlet suggested that the failure of the Cripps mission led to recrimination among the Congress High Command. A powerful and unifying cause was necessary to save the Congress from internal disruption and to rescue its hold over the masses. What better cry could it give than *Quit India* by the British? When the British Government withdrew, it would be succeeded by a provisional government

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[46] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 447.

which, dominated as it would be by the Congress, had no faith in the Allies' cause. Thus the movement was intended to hinder the great cause of freedom for which the Allies were fighting.

The movement was to be a struggle—a fight to finish, to end foreign domination, and all methods of mass movement from general strikes to stoppage of trains, non-payment of revenues, tampering with the loyalty of the civil service and the army were to be resorted to. How could such a movement remain non-violent? The entire phraseology used by Gandhiji and his lieutenants was provocative and associated with violence. They wished to launch a violent movement of an all-India nature.

From August 11 the situation deteriorated rapidly. Apart from hartals, protest meetings and similar demonstrations, concerted outbreaks of mob violence, arson, murder and sabotage took place; these were directed against either communications of all kinds or against the police. These outbreaks started simultaneously in widely separated areas such as the Provinces of Madras, Bombay, Bihar, U.P. and Central Provinces. The damage was extensive and could not have been carried out without previous intent and preparations. For a considerable period Bengal was completely cut off from the rest of India and the railway lines disrupted. This was the area where the enemy attack was expected. The whole picture was one of calculated venom directed against selected objectives than of an indignant people hitting out indiscriminately in resentment against the arrests of their leaders.

The first wave of violent mass disorders subsided by the sixth week, but there was a drift towards terrorism. Cases of arson, sabotage and of murderous assaults on public servants continued. Bombs made their appearance in Bombay, the Central Provinces and the United Provinces. The widespread nature of the disturbances following the arrests of leaders on August 9 led certain quarters to conclude that this was no Congress movement, but a spontaneous rising of the people. It was nothing of the kind; the Indian people were not behind it, the Muslims, the Scheduled Castes, Labour stood entirely aloof. Gandhiji had been vigorously propagating the Quit India movement for weeks, the Congress Working Committee had formally endorsed the policy and the AICC sanctioned the movement.

The evidence collected, according to Government, proved that the responsibility for the mass uprising and individual crimes was entirely that of the Congress under the leadership of Gandhiji.

In July 1943 Gandhiji after a painstaking close study, wrote a rejoinder, challenging the Government to produce evidence for its statements and to place on trial the detenus so that they might rebut the charges and defend themselves.

Of course the Government was not prepared for judicial proceedings as it knew its case would not bear such a probe.

VI. Rallying Anti-Congress Parties

The most prominent step in the second line of defence was taken on July 2, 1942. It was announced that the King had been pleased to approve the appointment to the Viceroy's Executive Council of a number of new members. Their total number was increased from 12 to 15 including the Viceroy.

Of the 14 members three were officials and eleven non-officials. The eleven included one European, one Scheduled Castes representative, one Sikh, four Hindus, and four Muslims. Obviously there could be no Congressman, and no Muslim Leaguer for both had refused to serve on the Executive Council. Sultan Ahmad who had accepted the membership was a Leaguer but was repudiated by the League.

An Indian was appointed to the War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council.

The first fruit of this measure was the unanimous decision of the Executive Council to arrest Gandhiji and other Congress leaders and to ban the Congress organisation. Thus the Government demonstrated that many prominent Indians regarded the Congress programme as harmful, and approved Government's policy.

The third line aimed at consolidating the Muslim opposition to the Congress. The weakness of the Muslim League's case was that all the four Muslim majority provinces had governments not affiliated to the League. In this situation the claim of the League to be the sole representative organisation of the entire Muslim community lacked validity. Jinnah had tried hard to persuade these provinces to recognise the supremacy of the League but had so far failed. He appealed to Linlithgow for help which was extended to him in two ways. In the first place, the War Cabinet in its proposals gave recognition to Jinnah's claim for secession of Muslim provinces from the Indian Union and thus enormously increased his prestige and influence.

In the second place the Governors of these provinces obliged Jinnah by contriving the installation of Muslim League ministries and the removal or dismissal of the non-League Governments.

In Bengal since 1937 there were many changes in the ministry, though Fazlul Haq, the leader of the Krishak Praja Party, managed to remain the chief minister in all combinations till March 1943. Haq was a trimmer who had no fixed principles and was ready to coalesce with any party which could ensure his chief ministership. His first

venture was a combination of his Krishak Praja Party and the Muslim League. Then he became dissatisfied with his colleagues of the Muslim League and formed at the end of 1941 a new government consisting of representatives of his own party together with the representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Forward Bloc and independents. Fazlul Haq's combination counted 150 votes in a house of 250.

The Governor of Bengal, John Herbert was extremely suspicious of the coalition in which Subhas Bose's followers were strongly entrenched. The League Party was anxious to drive out Fazlul Haq. He had defied the Muslim League and called upon his head the wrath of Jinnah. Their motion to defeat the Government had failed twice. Then the Governor intervened, sent for Haq, presented him with a letter of resignation and compelled him to sign it on pain of dismissal. Thus Haq was kicked out and Nazimuddin of the Muslim League installed as Premier on April 24, 1943.

In the Panjab Sikandar Hayat Khan had made an agreement with Jinnah by which while the Unionist Party would continue to enjoy the status of the official ministerial party, the Muslim members of the Unionist Party would join the Muslim League but would continue to support the Unionist Party.

On the death of Sikandar Hayat Khan in December 1942 Khizr Hayat Khan became Premier. Jinnah pressed him to replace the Unionist Party by the Muslim League Party. He resisted and refused to carry out Jinnah's behest. Jinnah denounced his conduct at a conference in Sialkot for violating the discipline of the Party and adopting an unprecedented and unheard of course.

Khizr Hayat Khan in his reply expressed his determination to stand by the Pact, but gave the assurance: "The fact that I have found it impossible to accept Mr. Jinnah's demand does not mean that our ultimate objective, *viz.*, the cultural protection and economic betterment of the Muslim masses is different. The All-India Muslim League Resolution of 1940 is the sheet anchor of the Muslims in the Panjab as elsewhere. The Muslims of the Panjab must have the right of self-determination."[47]

In spite of the declaration, the League Action Committee expelled him from the League. Even then his loyalty to the League was not shaken. He declared his whole-hearted support for the Pakistan resolution and gave the promise "I shall do all I can to help my community's efforts to realize that idea."

But Khizr Hayat was resilient and the Panjab remained under

[47] For Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana's statement, see Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims*, pp. 283-86; also *The Indian Annual Register*, 1944, Vol. I. p. 219.

Unionist rule. However, the Governor and the officials strongly favoured Jinnah and the League, and their writ ran in the Panjab administration.

The two largest provinces were thus gained for the League. In Sind, Allah Bakhsh, a nationalist was chief minister. He expressed disapproval of the repressive policy of Government. The Governor under Section 51 of the 1935 Act dismissed him. Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah of the Muslim League was asked to assume office in October 1942.

In the North-West Frontier Province, on the resignation of the Congress ministry of Dr. Khan Sahib, Aurangzeb Khan, a Muslim Leaguer, was commissioned by the Governor to form the ministry. In Assam Saadullah a Leaguer formed the ministry.

Thus five provinces came under the rule of the Muslim League ministries with the active support of the British Government. The claim of the Muslim League to its exclusive right to speak on behalf of the Muslims was established. The Government had gained its purpose of neutralizing the Congress demand for independence and union. The line followed by Government gave it relief for at least the period of the war.

VII. Gandhiji's Fast

While the Government was engaged in the task of quelling disturbances, strange things were happening in the Aga Khan Palace, Poona. Gandhiji, the prime commander of the movement whose object was the extermination of British power and rule in India, was carrying on correspondence with the supreme representative of that power in India, who was endeavouring to extirpate the movement. The one opponent was expostulating with the other—whom he addressed as "dear friend", on his unfairness in treating him as an instigator of violence and disorder while his sole aim was to rescue Britain from its false position as an imperialist power and to re-establish its fame as the true champion of freedom and democracy.

The reply of the opponent was a suave but firm denial of unfairness and an exhortation to make amends by denouncing the movement. Gandhiji insisted that there was no movement as neither the Congress Committee nor he had either given the order to start it or placed any programme before the country. Linlithgow would not withdraw the accusation that he and the Congress were responsible for what had happened.

The correspondence was unique in the history of struggle for independence, but it proved sterile.

The other event which sent the whole country into a paroxism of anxiety and agitation was Gandhiji's fast which was occasioned by the correspondence which questioned his integrity and his devotion to truth and non-violence. He had failed to convince the Viceroy of the purity of his motives and of his absolute faith in truth and non-violence. He informed Linlithgow, "It (the fast) is on my part meant to be an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you. If I do not survive the ordeal, I shall go to the Judgement Seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as a representative of an all powerful Government and me as a humble man who had tried to serve his country and humanity through it."[48]

The self-purificatory fast which commenced on February 10, 1943 ended on March 3. Its effect was to draw forcefully the attention of the outside world to the Indian problem.

The fast evoked worldwide interest. In India almost all political parties and communities—with the exception of the Muslim League, appealed to the Government of India and sent memorials to the Government in England to release Gandhiji unconditionally. Three members of the Executive Council—Messrs Mody, Aney and Sarkar, resigned in protest on February 17, 1943. The All-India Leaders Conference on February 19 demanded his release and called to Churchill urging his intervention.

Abroad in the United States of America there was anxiety lest the fast increase the difficulties in the prosecution of war. The personal representative of Roosevelt, Phillips, wanted to find out if the Congress could be induced to change its attitude, and requested the Government's permission to interview Gandhiji and the members of the Working Committee in detention. But permission was refused.

The Government had made up its mind not to allow Gandhiji or the Congress leaders any opportunity during the war to remain free. No amount of pressure could move them from this position. The standard reply of the Viceroy, the Secretary of State, and the Prime Minister was unless the Congress repudiated its resolution of Quit India, withdrew the civil disobedience movement and promised to co-operate in the war effort no change would be made in Government's policy.

The disturbances which followed the arrest of Gandhiji and the members of the Congress Working Committee on August 9, 1942, were unplanned and spontaneous, unlike the movements of non-cooperation and civil disobedience which Gandhiji had led in 1920 and 1930. Both these had a definite objective and both were conducted according

[48] Tendulkar, D. G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 195.

to non-violent methods. Regarding the development of the movement Gandhiji did believe that once it was launched it acquired a self-propelling force which directed its course in response to the action of the opposite party and of other circumstances, for example, the attitude of those who did not agree with the objects and methods of the movement.

Because of his belief that the aim of non-violent non-cooperation was not coercion but persuasion, not inflicting pain on others, but suffering pain by the non-cooperator, and also because he was convinced that truth however much and long resisted must eventually prevail, it was part of his programme to attempt to bring about a change in the mind of those who in his opinion were misguided in obstructing him. For what he desired was not to injure the other party, but to secure the moral good, the good of the two opposing sides.

In pursuance of these principles, in 1942, he intended to meet the Viceroy and to explain to him that he was neither pro-Japanese nor defeatist, but he wished the victory of the Allied Powers which would be morally justified only if Britain shed its immoral imperialism. Otherwise, there would be little difference between the Allies and the Axis Powers, and no truth-loving person could conscientiously discriminate between them.

It is most likely that during the course of these interviews he would have discovered what ought to be the immediate objective of the movement if it became inevitable, as he did in 1940, by selecting freedom of speech as the objective of individual Satyagraha.

He also expected to discuss these matters with his colleagues on August 9 before meeting the Viceroy. All that the resolution of August 8, 1942 had decided, he held, was the general policy of the Congress in case the demand of the Congress for immediate transfer of power, with due consideration for the war effort, was rejected. Gandhiji had announced that before actually starting the movement he would make an attempt to persuade the Viceroy to accept the terms of the Congress for cooperation in the prosecution of the war.

The Government, however, in the pursuit of its immediate advantage, completely ignored its own permanent though distant interests. It treated Gandhiji's w ning that even if Britain succeeded in the war its empire was doomec 'th disdain. It paid no heed to his premonition that Britain's war hout India's freedom would end in defeat. Yet the end of the war ..d prove both these forecasts of Gandhiji to be substantially correct. The Empire disintegrated, Britain lost its primacy in world affairs.

The trio of Churchill, Amery and Linlithgow, the short-sighted helmsmen of the British Empire, steered the ship of state on to a course which was bound to end in its destruction. Prematurely, they congra-

tulated themselves that they had crushed the enemy—the Congress, that they had removed the obstruction which threatened to hamper the war effort, that they had gained respite from attending to the obstreperous and agonising political problems of India for the duration of the war, and that they had succeeded in bringing about serious decline in the popularity of the Congress with the public.

The Government was anxious to avert the misguided endeavour of the Americans to press the British Government to yield to Indian demands. They wanted to demonstrate that the Congress aid was not necessary to obtain the requisite supply of men and materials from India; secondly, that the Congress was not so important or influential as the Americans thought; and thirdly, that they could easily obliterate the nationalist organisation and proceed unhindered with the main task of fighting the Axis Powers.

In the event the calculations of the Government proved to be very wide of the mark. The Congress instead of suffering defeat or losing public esteem came out with flying colours, its prestige enhanced and popularity augmented. This was convincingly proved by the joyous acclaim and exultant demonstrations which marked the release of Congress leaders.[49] Even those who had completely forsaken the Congress creed of non-violence continued to remain loyal to the Congress and its leaders, especially Gandhiji. Aruna Asaf Ali wrote from her hide-outs letters to Gandhiji in which she poured out the anguish of her soul divided between her devotion to the great master and her faith in her personal judgement. They revealed how intense was the deference and regard of the young revolutionaries for the old Congress leader even when they disagreed with him in the methods of struggle.[50] Even the government servants, in spite of the benefits they enjoyed, wanted the British to quit.

So far as the effect of the disturbances was concerned, Linlithgow observed, the Quit India Movement had drastically crippled the British war effort at a time when India was in imminent danger of foreign invasion. In addition to the disruption of communications with the threatened Eastern region, the movement had caused a breakdown in the supply of essential commodities to the troops. "Forty-five per cent of India's production of Khaki was halted by strikes, the production of leather goods was cut by fifty per cent." The troops were affected because the cigarette producing concerns were hampered by the short supply of cigarette paper as a result of damage to the factory manufacturing it. Then the factories producing sewing cotton were closed down and made cotton thread for sewing military clothes unavailable.[51]

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[49] Azad, A K., *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[50] Hutchins, F. G., *Spontaneous Revolution*, pp. 334-36.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 327.

It is difficult to calculate the consequences of the disturbances in the Burma campaign, but doubtless the early defeats of the British army on the eastern frontier were partly due to them. In his speech at Calcutta on December 17, 1942, Linlithgow spoke of "serious diversion of military forces and interruption in the w ı effort."[52]

VIII. American Sympathy for Freedom Struggle

Nor were the Government's massive efforts to mislead the American public by their expensive propaganda altogether successful. The propaganda machine of the British was headed by no less a person than the late Viceroy of India, the accredited British Ambassador, Halifax, who was supported by one of the ablest Indian members of the Civil Service, Girja Shankar Bajpai, the Indian High Commissioner in America. Their propaganda was neutralized by men of letters like Edgar Snow, Pearl Buck, Lin yu-Tang, journalists like Louis Fischer statesmen like Wendell Wilkie, some Governors of States, some Labour leaders and some University professors who supported the movement for self-government for India during these years.

In official circles from President Roosevelt downwards much anxiety was shown concerning Britain's obduracy in refusing to settle with the Congress. Among the officials, Johnson and Phillips, played an important role. Johnson's activities during the Cripps visit to India have been narrated above. His successor as personal representative of the American President, Ambassador William Phillips became the centre of a bitter controversy on account of his reports on India.

Linlithgow suspected him and refused to allow him to meet Gandhiji in the Aga Khan Palace. He had good reasons to do so, for within a fortnight of his arrival in Delhi, Phillips was describing the Viceroy as a representative of the old school of imperialists of England and lambasting the British bureaucracy which "cannot really envisage a free India fit to govern itself".[53]

In another letter he stated, "The heart of the problem is to me the lack of faith in the promises of the British Government".[54] Then on March 3, he proposed a solution for the deadlock, namely, to convene a conference of the leaders of the Indian parties invited on behalf of the President of the United States and under the patronage of the King of England, to meet together to discuss plans for the future with an American as president.

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

[53] *The Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. II. From W. Phillips to the President, New Delhi, January 22, 1943.

[54] *Ibid.*, January 25, 1943.

He recommended the plan because it provided the guarantee required by the Indians.[55]

Whatever the intentions of Phillips, such a scheme had not the ghost of a chance of British approval. But Phillips continued to press the President for action. In a letter he pointed out, "India is suffering from paralysis, the people are discouraged and there is a feeling of growing helplessness. . . . India is in a state of inertia, frustration, divided counsels and helplessness, with growing distress and dislike for the British and disappointment and disillusionment with regard to Americans."[56]

His remedy was "to try with every means in our power to make Indians feel that America is with them and in a position to go beyond mere public assurances of friendship."[57]

On May 14, 1943, Phillips who had by then returned to the USA wrote a letter to the President in which he drew his attention to (1) "the highest importance that we should have around us a sympathetic India", (2) "there is no evidence that the British intend to do much more than give token assistance" (in the war against Japan), (3) "the Indians feel that they have nothing to fight for as they are convinced that the proposed war aims of the United Nations do not apply to them", (4) "The present Indian army is purely mercenary. . . . General Stilwell has expressed to me his concern over the situation and in particular in regard to the poor morale of the Indian officers", (5) "The attitude of the general public towards the war is even worse. Lassitude and indifference and bitterness have increased as a result of the famine conditions, the growing high cost of living and continued political deadlock."[58]

According to Phillips, there was only one remedy to this highly unsatisfactory situation and "that is to change the attitude of the people of India towards the war, make them feel that we want them to assume responsibilities to the United Nations and are prepared to give them facilities for doing so, and that the voice of India will play an important part in the reconstruction of the world."[59]

This letter somehow leaked out. The British Government felt mortified, created a furore with the USA Government, and demanded a public repudiation.

But the American Acting Secretary of State, unmindful of British

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[55] *Ibid.*, March 3, 1943.
[56] *Ibid.*, April 19, 1943.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] *Ibid.*, May 14, 1943.
[59] *Ibid.*

protests, wrote through the American Ambassador in London to Phillips, "The Department concurs in your opinion"[60].

While the letter of Phillips was the subject of discussion between the two Governments, Caroe, the Secretary to the Department of External Affairs in New Delhi, telegraphed to the Secretary of State for India in London, declaring Phillips *'persona non grata'* who could not be received again by the Government of India.

Senator Chandler got hold of this telegram and read it out in the Senate, and denounced "British interference" in American diplomatic matters.

The episode sheds a good deal of light on the attitudes of the Governments of the United States of America and the United Kingdom. It is a measure of the success of Britain to influence the opinion of the American Government. But the difference of opinion had little practical effect. It was felt that the United States could not exert greater pressure upon Britain which might affect the cooperation of the Allies in the war.

The carefully prepared plan of the Government of India to smash the Congress by a heavy hammer blow did not yield the desired result. The plan assumed that the Government would have to deal with a movement similar to that of 1920 and 1930. But to its surprise the movement of 1942 had nothing in common with the previous civil disobedience campaigns. So in great alarm it just struck out wildly almost panic-struck.

It found to its great disappointment that although the terror let loose largely suppressed the open manifestation of the trouble, it had sent the rebels underground to continue their activity, and not only the politically conscious classes but the masses too had become involved and even the rich industrialists seemed to support them. In any case the Government received no effective or willing help from the Hindus, nor from the Muslims who remained neutral at the bidding of Jinnah. Linlithgow admitted in December 1942, "uprising continues to call for the utmost vigilance."[61]

The prolongation of the struggle and the continuation of the acts of sabotage were disconcerting. The result was that the early confidence of the Government in its power to obtain quick mastery over the situation faded. The Government's claim that the masses as a whole were still loyal and the Congress influence was on the decline began to look foolish and the claim of the Congress that it enjoyed the confidence of the people appeared less fantastic.

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[60] *Ibid.* Letter from the Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the UK, July 28, 1944.

[61] Hutchins, G. F., *op. cit.*, p. 329.

The reason was that the very ferocity of official attack had created a reaction. The Provincial Governments reported to the Centre the growing alienation of the people of all classes from the Government.

For instance, the Under Secretary of the Home Department noted about Government's "professed friends" namely the Zamindars and large land-holders of Bihar : "I am not aware that the Bihar Zamindars on the whole emerged with any very creditable record from the Congress disturbances, rather the contrary and they are, I would suggest, very fair weather friends and no very substantial support against Congress".[62]

Casey, Governor of Bengal, wrote to the Viceroy on June 22, 1944, as follows :

"The fact of the matter is that the great majority of educated Hindu opinion is against us, and while the terrorist parties are comparatively small there is an undercurrent of general Hindu sympathy, with them, and even admiration of them."[63]

The Government of the United Provinces stated : "Few Hindus probably approve of the action which has been found necessary to maintain order. With one or two exceptions little help has been received from people from whom help might have been expected".[64]

The Bombay Government reported : "It is the common experience of the Police today that the ordinary villager will not bear evidence against Congress workers either because he is afraid to do so, or because he is in tacit sympathy".[65] The Government did not expect that the movement would collapse quickly, and noted, "There is little disposition on the part of the general public to regard saboteurs and bandits as anti-social and criminal elements of society".[66]

Such universal mistrust and antipathy was bound to wear down the early self-confidence of the bureaucracy in its ability to deal effectively with the disturbances, which it attributed to the Congress. But disillusionment came and permeated from the lower cadres to the highest officials, as the confession of Churchill to the King shows.

The changed mood obliged the rulers to reexamine the question in order to revise their policy, but as long as Linlithgow remained at the helm of affairs in India, and the Congress leaders including Gandhiji

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[62] Government of India, Home Department, Political (I) Section, File No. 7/23/43, October 27, 1943.

[63] Home Department, Political (I) Section, File No. 38/1/44-Pol.(I), Casey's letter to Wavell, dated June 22, 1944.

[64] Home Department, Political (I), File No. 18/2/42-Pol.(I). The Fortnightly Report for the first half of August, 1942.

[65] Home Department, File No. 18/10/42-Pol.(I), Fortnightly Report for the first half of October, 1942.

[66] Ibid., Fortnightly Report for the second half of October, 1942.

continued in detention no attempt towards the resolution of the deadlock was possible.

IX. Gandhiji's Release

Thus time passed. Gandhiji was nearing the seventy-fifth year of his life. His health was indifferent as he suffered from malaria, anaemia and low blood pressure. Then suddenly on May 5, 1944, the Inspector-General of Police came into his room and gave him the news of release.

The termination of Gandhiji's detention marked the end of the Gandhian era. The events of the last two years, following the aborted civil disobedience movement signalised the dawn of a new stage in the struggle for independence. The method of civil resistance seemed to have made its utmost contribution and exhausted its utility or popularity. The World War had created an atmosphere of violence and the Indian nationalists were becoming more and more convinced that the solution of their problem needed the revision of the Gandhian method. They thought non-violent non-cooperation was far above the comprehension of the people and far beyond their humdrum moral reach. Only a Gandhi could lift them and that too for a short period above the ordinary self. But the inexorable processes of nature were acting on his body, making his availability as leader for a long time problematic.

Men like Subhas Chandra Bose were the precursors of the new age. The age marked a departure from the exalted moral values, from the subordination of means to ends, which Gandhiji stood for, and it sought to direct the movement for independence along paths which history had made familiar and which common human nature was accustomed to traverse.

After 1944, therefore, Gandhiji does not remain the helmsman who steers the ship of Indian politics. He no longer decides or dictates. He becomes more and more a revered, universally loved sage, to whom the new leaders come for advice and counsel, for encouragement or warning and for aid in overcoming their difficulties. Even more he shines in his saintliness, as he ministers to the needs of the poor, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. However, he no longer likes to stay in Delhi, the hub of politics, and of frantic activity, where vital decisions were taken, and the future of India moulded. He would be found in Bihar torn by communal barbarities consoling the afflicted Muslims or in East Bengal where the Hindus were the victims of unmentionable atrocities, to calm the passions of hatred and anger of the persecutors and to apply the healing balm to the wounds of the sufferers.

X. Effects of Gandhian movement

But it must be recognised that Gandhiji's movements had achieved two great results. In the first place they had removed the illusion of the British that their empire was morally justified, that its beneficence, though denied by the few, was recognised by the Indian masses, that the majority of them were loyal and desired the continuation of British rule. This moral foundation had supported their faith and strengthened their self-confidence.

Gandhiji's mass civil disobedience movement knocked out these foundations. It was at last borne in upon the British that they were not wanted in India, and that their belief that any section of the Indian people—the Muslims, the Depressed Classes or the States' people favoured the continuance of their rule, was a delusion.

The proof of the disillusionment is available from the statements of the wielders of authority themselves. The biographer of King George VI writes :

"Politically the Cripps Mission had marked a stage in the retrocession of the British from power in India which it was never possible to retrace. The repression of the 1942 rebellion had shown that the prestige and power of the British were still high, when they chose to exercise them; but they were definitely in danger, since events had shown how easy it was for agitators to inflame the mobs and to make ordered government impossible over large parts of the country."[67]

He continues, "The King had been genuinely alarmed at the degree to which the idea of the transfer of power in India had become an admitted inevitability in the minds of British party leaders, a fact which has been gloomily disclosed to him by Churchill at one of their Tuesday luncheons in July 1942."[68]

The King noted in his diary, July 28, 1942, "He (Churchill) amazed me by saying that his colleagues and both, or all three parties in Parliament were quite prepared to give up India to the Indians after the war. He felt they had already been talked into giving up India. Cripps, the Press and the U.S. public opinion have all contributed to make their minds up that our rule in India is wrong and has always been wrong for India."[69]

Thus, whatever they might continue to state in public Churchill and company were reluctantly obliged to realize that Gandhiji had succeeded by his non-violent effort to convince them that they had to quit.

The second result was that the scrupulously open, and generally

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67 Wheeler, Bennett, J. W., *King George VI : His Life and Reign*, p. 702

68 *Ibid.*, p. 703.

69 *Ibid.*

non-violent and largely hate-free character of the struggle prevented the growth of war-psychosis which paralyzes reason, establishes the vicious circle of offence and revenge, and promotes the thirst for bloodshed, regardless of consequences. Instead of rousing the passions for violence, these movements involving suffering patiently endured, caused nausea, disgust and a tiredness on the part of the rulers, which eventually led to the realization of the futility of all these proceedings.

XI. The Muslim League Triumph

The appointment of Cripps as the messenger of the Cabinet to conduct negotiations with the Indian parties did not please the Muslims, for they knew that he was inclined to support the Congress point of view and was a friend of some leading Congressmen. In his first meeting with Jinnah he dispelled the prejudice and when he explained his proposals and indicated the Cabinet's approval of the idea of provincial option he won his friendship. At Jinnah's suggestion he modified the conditions on which the option could be exercised. According to this formula, "If 60 per cent of the legislature do not vote in favour of accession then the minorities shall have the right to challenge a plebiscite."[70] This arrangement favoured the Muslims as it made it easier for them to claim a plebiscite.

Jinnah was happy that he had won the battle against the Congress. The Cabinet proposal without saying it in so many words had conceded the demand for Pakistan. The concession was the culmination of the policy which Britain had deliberately launched in 1906. Amery the architect of the policy told Churchill that the pledges given to the Muslims for safeguarding their interests would be redeemed if the local option clause was included in the offer. He said, "Happily the distribution of Moslems and Hindus is such that this can be done on a provincial basis, by declaring that if a majority of provinces agree upon a constitution, we will accept it so far as they are concerned leaving dissident provinces to stay out for the time being, or even altogether."[71]

Writing to the Viceroy the Secretary of State was more explicit. He stated, "We have safeguarded the Muslims over Pakistan."[72]

But the political position in regard to the demand of Pakistan in March 1942 was extremely doubtful. Though claimed by Jinnah and the League it had no support from the Muslim majority provinces and from a number of Muslim organisations. Sikandar Hayat Khan, the

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[70] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 539.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 240. Amery to Churchill, February 25, 1942.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 295, Amery to the Marquess of Linlithgow, March 2, 1942.

Premier of the Panjab, had written to the Viceroy, "I have recently sounded a few prominent leaders and found genuine desire for settlement on both sides and differences in basic principles reduced to very narrow compass and capable of being composed without much difficulty."[73] He did not subscribe to the theory of two nations and two sovereign states in India. In the Panjab Assembly, out of 84 Muslim members 73 were Unionists.

Fazlul Haq of Bengal was a *persona non grata* with the League, and in the Bengal Legislative Assembly the Leaguers could count upon only 40 votes in a house of 250. The North-West Frontier Province under the lead of the Khan brothers followed the Congress policies. Sind was faction-ridden, but in its Assembly the Muslim Leaguers were in a hopeless minority. In Assam again the Muslims were in a minority in the legislature and could not sway the decision. In March, three Muslim Premiers—Fazlul Haq (Bengal), Khan Sahib (NWF Province), and Allah Bakhsh (Sind), jointly sent a telegram to the Prime Minister, "imperatively demanding the immediate transfer of real power to India and the recognition of freedom so as to enable representative Indians to establish representative government with full powers to assume the responsibility of defence."[74]

Among the Muslim groups there were many who differed from the Muslim League on the question of Pakistan, *e.g.* the Jamiatul Ulama, Ahrars, Shias, Momins, Ittihad-i-Millat and Khudai Khidmatgars. Although Jinnah had some very enthusiastic Leaguers in the minority provinces it would be wrong to say that they were in a body Leaguers. In any case their destiny was outside Pakistan, although they shouted the loudest in its favour.

The acceptance of the League's claim of Pakistan in the face of plain facts to the contrary was an act of supererogation on the part of the British rulers. It was obviously inspired by imperialist considerations, not so much to endow the Muslim community with an unwanted sovereign state, but to thwart the Congress demand for independence. It appears that Government was dangling before the eyes of the Muslims Pakistan in order to keep them quiet during the war. This is suggested by the evidence of both the spokesmen of the rulers and the despatches of the representatives of the American Government in India.

Both Amery and Wavell continued to harp on the unity of India, while offering partition. Why? The explanation is provided by the memorandum of a conversation by Calvin H. Oakes of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs. The participants in the conversation were :

Colonel Johnson

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 417, Linlithgow to Amery, March 13, 1942.

[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 398-9. Turnbull to Pinnell, March 10, 1942.

Colonel Herrington
Mr. Murray
Mr. Alling
Mr. Oakes
Mr. Parker

The conversation took place in Washington on May 26, 1942. Its purpose was to determine why the Cripps Mission failed and what was the state of affairs in India—militarily and politically. During the course of discussion Col. Johnson and Col. Herrington who had both been in India recently "expressed the firm conviction that the British are prepared to lose India, as they lost Burma, rather than make any concessions to Indians in the belief that India will be returned to them after the war with the *status quo ante* prevailing."[75]

Wavell was opposed to an independent state in the north-western part of India because that would make the defence of the frontier against an invader difficult for the Government. He apparently assumed that the British army would continue to be responsible for the protection of India. Then there was the danger of the formation of a Muslim bloc.

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Pakistan was not so much a reward for the services rendered by the Muslim League or a grant in recognition of the loyalty and cooperation of the Muslim community in war, nor a surrender before the threat of Muslim opposition, but part of a plan to secure the post-war impreial interests.

Of the imperial interests the crucial one was the Russian menace in Asia. Although Russia was an ally in the war, the British could not shed their fear of Russian expansion. Even during the last stages of the war Churchill was warning the USA of the danger from Russia. About the ways of meeting the Russian challenge there were two views. One favoured the creation of a Muslim state in north-west India which would constitute the eastern-most clasp of the belt of Muslim states from the Atlantic to the Himalayas. The belt would prevent Russia from breaking into the British sphere of influence and power.

The second view considered the problem as limited to the security of India. The upholders of this view maintained that a divided India would not be able to stem the Russian aggression, nor for many years could the two states in combination offer successful resistance. It would be necessary to create a third force better equipped, better trained and more efficient for this purpose. Naturally this force would have to be under British command to be able to utilize the resources of the two states.

[75] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942, Vol. I, pp. 657-62.

Linlithgow and Amery among politicians and Wavell among the military appeared to belong to the second school of thought. Tuker discussing the partition wrote about its consequences for the army.

"It was expected that she (army) would split in half.... That, it would seem, must be the end of our army; but no, we saw that there was even then a chance of saving it and in later days rebuilding it. ...

This one chance lay in handing out to each of the two parts a contingent of its own and in keeping a third part under the management of all the three parties concerned, British, Muslim and Hindu. If possible the third contingent should be built round one completely impartial body: the Gorkha brigade under the British officers. If a percentage of the technical part of this contingent could be British at the outset. it would add greatly to its strength and reputation for impartiality."[76]

In any case the offer of Pakistan immediately brought its reward. In the very first interview on March 25, Cripps won the friendship of Jinnah. At the end of the second interview on March 28 Cripps recorded his impressions, "it was quite clear from his (Jinnah's) whole attitude that his Committee (the Working Committee of the Muslim League) had already accepted the scheme in principle."[77] On April 4, he wrote to Churchill, "The Muslim League are satisfied and prepared to accept the scheme as it stands."[78]

But on April 11, on learning that the Congress Working Committee had rejected the proposals, the League Committee followed the Congress and recorded its decision that the proposals were unsatisfactory and unacceptable. They complained of the narrow margin of Muslim majority in the four provinces as constituted then and therefore the difficulty of obtaining a clear vote in favour of non-accession; then the plebiscite would be based on the entire population and not on the Muslims only as desired by the League. Lastly, Pakistan was only indirectly conceded and not explicitly accepted.

These, however, were merely after-thoughts. The real reason for rejection was that the Muslim League's acceptance in the absence of the agreement of the Congress would be valueless and would expose the League to ridicule. Says Coupland: "When in the event Congress rejected the Draft Declaration, Mr. Jinnah, as had been expected, followed suit. But the tone of his reaction was markedly less hostile than that of the Congress President."[79]

So far as Indian politics were concerned the Cripps mission, according to Coupland, "made the Indian public face the communal pro-

[76] Tuker, Lt. General Sir Francis, *While Memory Serves*, p. 23.

[77] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 512.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 636.

[79] Saiyid, M. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 768-9.

blem—and that, not her relations with Britain, is India's major problem—more squarely than they had ever done before."[80] That was probably true, for the object of the British rulers was to make the problem of unity focal and relegate the question of independence to the background. But what is more important, it tremendously enhanced the influence of Jinnah over the Muslims, and his value in the eyes of Government as a counterpoise against the Congress. His vanity was boosted to an insufferable degree. Cripps, however, was greatly impressed by Jinnah and he persuaded the Viceroy, who had been considering the implementation of the August 1940 declaration but had to postpone it because of the Cripps interlude, to resume his efforts. Linlithgow made soundings through Firoz Khan Noon, who told him :

"Jinnah's tactics were likely to be to pose as willing to cooperate, but that in practice he would not be willing to come in since he would be afraid to do so without Congress, and apprehensive that, in the event of sanctions having to be applied to Hindus without Congress in the Central Government, a violent counter-attack would be launched on him."[81]

But Jinnah was clever enough to achieve his object without putting himself in a compromising position. So he told Noon, he would be delighted to come in even in the absence of the Congress on the following terms—the Executive Council of 15 should consist of eight from the Muslim League, probably two from the Mahasabha to be put in by the Viceroy, in addition to Depressed Classes and Sikh representatives to be approved by Jinnah,[82] thus claiming 10 out of 15 members for the League.

Linlithgow realized the preposterous nature of Jinnah's demand which in effect would give him a minimum of two-thirds of the Council. Linlithgow's comment was : "It is quite clear that we could not contemplate tying ourselves to Jinnah to the extent that he would like us to and I myself suspect that the true explanation of this excessive demand is either a desire to see how far we are on the run, or a desire to make demands so excessive that he knows that we could not accept them and that he could therefore hope to be in a position to say that he was willing to cooperate if given real power, and that any responsibility for non-cooperation rests with us in that his request for 'real power' has not been accepted."[83]

Having administered a rebuff to the Viceroy, Jinnah engaged in strengthening the organisation of the Muslim League and especially to

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 772.
[81] Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, pp. 761-62.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 774-5.

bring the Muslim majority provinces under League control. The Viceroy, although chagrined, had no alternative but to oblige him in the larger interests of Government. How the Governors of the Provinces lent their help to oust the non-League governments has been narrated above.

Jinnah got an opportunity to consolidate the position of the League and to spread its influence widely all over India when in May 1942 the All-India Congress Committee at Allahabad finally repudiated Cripps' proposals, reiterated the demand for immediate transfer of power, and expressed its disapproval of Rajagopalachari's resolution to enter into negotiations with the Muslim League on the basis of Pakistan. Jinnah warmed up his propaganda against the Congress. He told the correspondent of the International News Service of America "if Britain yielded to the Congress political blackmail and approved a national state dominated by the Hindus there would be immediate and terrible chaos."[84]

In May Gandhiji started his campaign to advocate Quit India, and failing in his attempts to arrive at a solution of the communal tangle he naturally concluded that the presence of the British was responsible for the failure. Jinnah characterized the demand for 'freedom for India', 'independence', 'National Government' as merely catchwords, deception and false propaganda, a "threat intended to coerce a distressed and shaken Britain to accede to Mr. Gandhi's demand."[85]

For the Muslims, according to him, the Congress demand was, "hegemony, supremacy, and Hindu dominion over all, at the cost of 100 millions of Musalmans."[86]

He predicted fearful consequences "if the British, even with the help of America, adopt any measures which militate in any way against our Pakistan demand. I am firmly of opinion that it will lead to terrible chaos and disaster, as one hundred millions of Musalmans of India will never forgive the British if they are let down."[87]

After the resolution of 14th July of the Congress Working Committee, Jinnah declared that the announcement of a mass civil disobedience movement, "is a challenge to the British Government in the first instance. ... But it is a challenge to Muslim India ... whose one and only object is by hook or by crook to bring about a situation which will destroy the Pakistan scheme."[88]

When on August 8 the All-India Congress Committee gave its

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[84] Jamiluddin Ahmad, *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, pp. 424-25.
[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 429.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 433.
[87] *Ibid.*, p 434.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 444.

sanction for the launching of the civil disobedience movement, Jinnah fully approved Government's arresting Congress leaders and taking firm measures to quell the riots. He said in a special interview to the *Daily Herald* of London in Bombay on August 14, "there can be no negotiations until the Congress Party leaders change their minds and drop their campaign. The whole policy of the Congress has been that power must be transferred from British Raj to Hindu raj."[89]

Then turning to the British Government he served notice on them: "Suppose out of bitterness and anger, at British policy, I was to say tomorrow: 'embarrass, non-cooperate with the British Government', believe me, it will create at least 500 times more trouble than was experienced today .... as sixty-five per cent of the Indian army was composed of the Musalmans, the League campaign, if launched, will affect a large body of the army and besides the entire frontier would be ablaze, and that from the newspapers of the various Muslim countries (such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt) he gathered that the people there were in full sympathy with the demand of Muslim India, and that the newspapers in those countries were strongly supporting the Pakistan demand, and therefore he thought they would be bound to be influenced if there was a conflict between the Muslims and the British Government."[90]

These extracts show clearly what Jinnah's strategy was—damn the Congress for demanding independence, threaten the British if they showed an inclination to accept Congress demand, frighten the Hindus with the Pan-Islamic bogey, and make use of false figures to bolster the Muslim claims.

An instance of misleading by false figures is the statement about the composition of the army. Linlithgow gave only 35 per cent as the share of the Muslims in the army on March 6, 1942[91] against Jinnah's 65 per cent. After 1940 as a result of the failure of the so called martial races to provide the men needed, non-martial sources were tapped. In 1943, for this reason the following Muslim battalions were disbanded:

10 Baluch
12 Frontier Force
13 Frontier Force Rifles
14 Panjab
16 Panjab

Readjustments were carried out in 1 Panjab, 2 Panjab, 3 Rajputs,

89 *Ibid.*, p. 452.
90 *Ibid.*, p. 462-3.
91 Mansergh and Lumby, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

8 Panjab, 9 Jat, 13 Panjab, 17 Dogras, etc.[92]. The official historian writes : "Large-scale recruiting began from 1940-41. As time went on it became increasingly difficult to find suitable men." The latter months of 1943 "have been characterized by a steady decline in the numbers enrolled of the old pre-war classes due to exhaustion of their man-power."[93]

Lt. General Sir Francis Tuker, the last British G.O.C. in C., Eastern Command, gives the class composition of the Indian infantry in 1947. According to him there were 23 battalions of the Indian Army, of which 6¾ were Musalman and 16¼ non-Muslims, that is 34 per cent of the total.[94]

Lastly, Jinnah boosted Muslim morale with the vision of the world-wide solidarity of Islam, the unity of the Millat constituting the shield of the entire brotherhood. In his message on the occasion of *Id-ul-Fitr* (October 1942) he claimed :

"It is a matter of no small satisfaction to us that just as we have taken an abiding interest in the freedom and prosperity of the Muslim States, such as Turkey, Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and other countries and our sympathies have always gone out to them, so I find that the people of Muslim countries today have similarly displayed their concern and sympathy in our struggle for Pakistan."[95]

The policy of Jinnah was to take advantage of the weaknesses of the others—the weakness of the Congress for Indian unity, the weakness of the Government to oppose independence. He made the Congress run to him to beseech his favour by accepting his conditions; he frightened the Government by threat of uniting with the Congress and creating a situation in which they would have to surrender unless they promised to carry out his wishes.

By audacity, by shrewdness, by unswerving pursuit of his chosen objectives; by ruthlessly disregarding every other consideration including ethical principles, maxims of propriety, logic and politics; and by intense, devoted and sheer hard work, he won the day. He was favoured by luck. From 1942 to 1944 he had no rival in the field. All the Congress leaders were in goal, normal political activity was at a standstill, only his shadow lengthened over the land. The Government for its own purposes conspired to promote his cause. In return he refrained from embarrassing the Government in the war

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[92] Prasad, Bisheshwar, General Editor, *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War*, Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisation, p. 86.

[93] *Ibid.*, pp. 90-1.

[94] Tuker, F., *op. cit.*, p. 653, Appendix XII

[95] Jamiluddin Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 466.

effort, and gave his full moral support in the fight against the Congress. Above all he had become the Prophet of a new dispensation—Pakistan, which made a powerful appeal to the Muslim heart, awakened all the memories of their glorious past and stirred all their longings for power and sovereignty.

In a press conference on April 14, 1942, in discussing the Congress ultimatum to Cripps, he said, it was an attempt at "short-circuiting the paramount and vital issue in the name of the national demand." When the Congress Working Committee passed the famous resolution on Quit India on July 14, 1942, Jinnah characterized it as an attempt "to coerce the British Government to surrender to a Congress Raj. ....Britain dare not sacrifice the Muslims."

After the arrest of Gandhiji on 9th August, Jinnah issued a statement deeply regretting that the Congress had declared war on the Government regardless of all interests other than its own, and appealing to Muslims to keep completely aloof from the movement.

The League Working Committee endorsed Jinnah's views on August 20 at Bombay repeating the British charge against the Congress *viz.*, "What is really aimed at is the supreme control of the government of the country by the Congress."[96]

During these two years the Muslim League advanced with gigantic steps forward. Jinnah boasted, not hundreds and thousands of Musalmans but millions followed him. His organisation spread its net ever wider to all the corners of India. He collected considerable funds and raised a volunteer corps. The League had left all other Muslim organisations behind and could legitimately claim to be the representative of the largest number of the community. With the support of the masses he had acquired the influence necessary for launching a movement of direct action.

Jinnah had acquired the position of the supreme leader (*Qaid-i-Azam*) of the Muslims. The League could order about even the tallest in the community, for instance, he compelled the Premiers of the Panjab and Bengal to resign from the National Defence Council and censured Sultan Ahmad on his acceptance of the membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

He had centralized the authority of the Muslim League in his own person; the Working Committee of the League was the creature of the President; the All-India Muslim League was a powerless body whose function was to receive and record the resolutions of the Working Committee. Thus Jinnah ruled the League "with a rod of iron". In 1943, he created a committee of action of not more than seven persons nomi-

[96] Coupland, R., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 300.

nated by the President in whose hands control and discipline were entrusted and later the planning of direct action also.

Jinnah was now the dictator, the masses followed him, the educated classes, especially the students, adored him, the men of property supported him, and men in power were afraid of him. But in the midst of all these gains his relations with the Muslim ministries were still unsatisfactory.

In Bengal in March 1943 Fazlul Haq had been unceremoniously dismissed by the Governor and a League ministry was put in office under Nazimuddin's premiership. As misfortune would have it the war augmented the scarcity of food caused by the vagaries of nature and a famine of unprecedented severity followed. Millions died of starvation. But "the Muslim League ministry thought that this was a great opportunity to establish their supporters and other Muslim traders in the lucrative business of distributing food involving a capital of millions of rupees. The Government not only supplied the capital but also met the losses incurred by the traders in the initial stages."[97]

Nazimuddin was affable but incompetent, his chief lieutenant Suhrawardy was believed to be corrupt.

In the Panjab Khizr Hayat Khan, the Chief Minister, was in the unhappy position of being pulled in opposite directions by the forces of the provincial politics, on the one side, and those of the All-India Muslim League, on the other. His solution was, on the one hand, to refuse to obey the behest of Jinnah to dissolve the Unionist Party and run the government in the name of the Muslim League, on the other, to vow homage to the League and loyalty to the Leader. But this did not satisfy Jinnah who broke negotiations with him.

Sind was riddled with personal intrigues and factious fights. Allah Bakhsh who leaned towards the Congress had been ousted and Ghulam Husain Hidayatullah appointed Premier in October 1942. But the change hardly improved the position of the League.

In the North-West Frontier Province after the withdrawal of the Congress ministry headed by Khan Sahib in October 1940, Aurangzab Khan the Muslim Leaguer was appointed as Premier. But the Province was under the influence of the Khan brothers and the League following was poor.

The record of the Muslim League governments in these provinces could not inspire much confidence in the ability of the Muslim majorities to maintain efficiently free and responsible democracies. Between the promises of the League and the performance of the League governments, there yawned a wide gulf.

[97] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *Pakistan, the Formative Phase* (1960), p. 231.

XII. The Famine of 1943

While the Government of India was flexing its muscles against the Congress in order to prove to the world and convince itself of its continuing prestige and power, it was making a pitiable demonstration of its feebleness in meeting the problems of internal administration and of defence against the apprehended invasion of the Japanese.

So far as the internal administration of the country was concerned, it has been shown in a previous chapter that the economy of the country relating to its most vital aspect, namely, production of food, was gradually deteriorating. The total output of foodgrains was falling from the early years of the 20th century. In the period 1896-1905 it was priced at 28.7 billion of rupees, in 1939-45 it had come down to 27.2 billion. If the first period index number was 100, the last period index number was 97.

During these five decades while the population of India increased by 34 per cent, the total output (including agriculture, industry and savings) increased by 24 per cent. In other words the per capita output went down from 100 to 91.

The figures of average annual per capita output of food are even more striking. In the first decade of the twentieth century the output was 560 lbs. per capita, in 1936-37 to 1945-46 it had declined to 399 lbs.

The growing gap between the consumption of an increasing population and the production of foodgrains to sustain it was partially filled by imports. Thus India which before 1919 was an exporter of grains became an importer. In the quinquennium 1935-36 to 1939-40 the net imports amounted to 1.4 million tons nearly. When in 1942 the Japanese occupied Burma the import of rice into India ceased. The food situation in India became critical. The authorities, however, refused to pay any heed to the dangerous situation, and remained complacent.

The condition in Bengal in 1942 was alarming. Bengal was a rice-producing area and its output met its requirements more or less, taking the requirements at a very low level per capita consumption. According to the authority of Dr. Aykroyd there was at all times serious undernourishment of some one-third of the population. In bad seasons even the minimum requirement could not be satisfied. The year 1941 was one such year.

The winter crop (*Aman*) was short by about 2 million tons and the deficiency could not be made up either by imports or by the later crops (*Boro* or spring and *aus* or autumn). The 1942 winter crop was good, but it was not sufficient to permit of any saving or accumu-

lation of stock for the next year. Then the 1943 crop failed giving nearly less than 3 million produce.

On top of this natural calamity there came the shock of other factors—the suspension of imports from Burma, the dislocation of trade in the country because of the controls and the threat of war on the frontier, the raising of provincial and district barriers, against the movement of grain and other essential supplies, the increase in the demand of the army, the influx of refugees from Burma and Malaya, and lastly the rise in prices. The Government's direct contribution to the tragedy was "the failure on the part of the administration to foresee at the beginning of the war in 1939 or even as late as April 1942 when Burma fell, the situation that developed in 1943 and to take timely action to meet it."[98]

Instead of holding food reserves, the Government asked the people to hoard private stocks and not to depend on Government in difficulties. Then in April 1942 the Denial Policy was followed : (1) the surplus of rice available was purchased by the Government at fixed prices, (2) the boats which were the chief means of transport in East Bengal were commandeered by the military to deny their use to the enemy. The result was that a feeling of tenseness and fear prevailed in Calcutta, which led to the flight of a large number of people including shopkeepers. This led to a breakdown of the distributive organisation.

The Government for a long time minimised the acuteness of the scarcity, although all the signs of an impending famine had begun to appear even in 1942. For instance, the impoverished labourers and cultivators had begun to migrate to towns and the price of coarse rice had risen from Rs. 5-10-0 per maund in January to Rs. 8-0-0 per maund in July in Calcutta.

The measures of the Provincial and Central Governments adopted to meet the situation worsened it. The incompetent Muslim League Government of Bengal exploited the misery of the people, by first taking control of supplies, and then employing thoroughly corrupt officials and inexperienced but greedy Muslim trade-agents to purchase and distribute foodgrains. The Government remained unconvinced of the famine conditions till the catastrophe overtook Bengal. The Food Member of the Executive Council of the Governor General continued to deny scarcity in the Legislative Assembly and the Secretary of State gave equally assuring statements in Parliament. Thus all the three limbs of the Government—the Ministry in Bengal, the Executive Council at the Capital, and the Secretary of State in London, exhibited

[98] Bhatia, B. M., *Famines in India*, 1851-1945, p. 321.

their utter lack of knowledge of the real state of affairs and complete inefficiency in dealing with the calamity.

The result was a horrible tragedy. The famine took a heavy toll of human life in Bengal. From July to December 1943 the number of deaths totalled 1.5 million according to the estimate of the Famine Enquiry Commission. But an Indian economist Professor Chattopadhyaya of the Calcutta University, on the basis of sample surveys of mortality, arrived at the figure of 3.5 million.[99] Not the number but the manner of dying by slow starvation, constitutes the most heart-rending part of this shameful and gruesome scourge.

XIII. Defence Inadequacy

In the field of defence the Government of India showed similar pitiable ineptitude. Till the entry of Japan in the war the Government was largely unconcerned regarding India's defence. Britain's traditional enemy Russia did not threaten any serious danger, and after its invasion by the Nazi forces there was complete sense of security from the direction of the North-West. Under the circumstances the main duty of the Indian Government was to send Indian troops and supplies to such theatres as Egypt, the Near East, North Africa and China. Thus all the plans of military action related to campaigns on the North-West frontier and had to be pigeon-holed.

The unexpected attack on Pearl Harbour and the astoundingly rapid successes of the Japanese which gave them the control of the Indian Ocean and brought them to the eastern frontiers of India opened up catastrophic possibilities. India had become in almost the twinkling of an eye the hub of allied defence. The loss of control over the Indian Ocean meant the depriving of the North Africa British forces of supplies from India and almost certain withdrawal, the cutting of the communication lines through the Persian Gulf and Iran to Russia exposed Russia to the greatest peril, and lastly the stopping of aid to China through the only air-route across India meant isolation of China.

How was the Government of India prepared to meet these almost mortal risks? Colonels Johnson and Herrington who were in India in the spring of 1942 on behalf of the Government of the United States to report on the conditions in India made the following statement in a discussion in New York in the Division of Near Eastern Affairs,[100] which was embodied in the memorandum of conversations

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 324.

[100] *Foreign Affairs of the United States*, 1942, Vol. I, pp. 657-61.

by Calvin H. Oakes. He writes, "Colonel Johnson stated that he had been reliably informed that the authorities did not propose to attempt any serious defence of India in the event of Japanese attack, and that he had so stated to Cripps. Cripps naturally refused to believe this; but was prevailed upon by Col. Johnson to confront General Wavell with the allegation. Cripps is reported to have told Col. Johnson later that Wavell had admitted that this was the case."[101]

According to Oakes, Johnson's assessment of the defence capability of the Indian Government was : "Lack of troops is aggravated by the poor quality of the British officer in India and Col. Johnson and Col. Herreington stated that it was obvious that India had been used as a dumping ground for the least capable of the officer personnel. Wavell himself, however excellent a general he may once have been, is viewed as exhausted physically and nervously and is considered to be not only incompetent himself, but to possess an incompetent staff."[102]

The two colonels were of the opinion, "the situation in India has deteriorated in the last two months to such an extent that unless the United States Government is prepared to send in the near future to India several divisions and 500 airplanes the Government would be wise to withdraw and to consider the country lost."[103]

According to the *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces*, the appreciation of the Joint Planning Staff was "that the Japanese attack, if at all, would be on a large scale, in which case reinforcement might be possible by air, but air position was weak."[104]

In the Paper which the Planning Staff prepared to meet the danger in April 1942, no comprehensive plan was produced, but it was clearly emphasized "that the existing resources were wholly inadequate for the defence of India."[105]

The writer of the Paper expected that the Japanese course of action would be first to break through North-East India and occupy Bengal, Orissa and Assam, then drive up the Ganges Valley and move westwards with Bombay as the ultimate objective. In this view with the depleted forces available and in the absence of effective reinforcements, it would be difficult to oppose a numerically superior hostile army and "deny any area to the enemy, or to hold more than temporarily focal points from which to make sorties."[106]

The war problem was affected by the famine in Bengal. The war

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[101] *Ibid.*

[102] *Ibid.*

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] Bisheshwar Prasad. *The Official History of the Indian Armed Forces*, Defence of India, p. 165.

[105] *Ibid.*, p. 167

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

scare was compelling thousands to leave Calcutta. Their flight westwards put a heavy pressure on the only railway line which connected Bengal with the western regions. This was creating a serious bottleneck for the movement of troops and materials. The famine was driving the people from the villages where food was unavailable to Calcutta and other towns. The crowding of the poor people in the streets of Calcutta where many were dying of starvation and disease was a threat to public health, order and safety. With bombs occasionally falling and invasion from across the border looming large, the situation was assuming serious prospects. These developments were taking place in a region where an invasion was expected. The people naturally blamed the Government for their miserable plight. The result was the growth of anti-British feeling, increase of sympathy for the Japanese, unrest and consequent lawlessness.

For a defence force to be surrounded by such hostile conditions was not a satisfactory situation, for it might affect war operations and even hinder them. The Congress leaders were well informed about both the unpreparedness of the Government for war and the ill will arising amongst the Indian people against their rulers, for they had close contacts with the American representatives in India regarding defence matters, and they were in direct and intimate contact with the masses. Their insistence upon the transfer of the substance of power including the subject of defence was based upon this knowledge.

According to their understanding of the situation, what could alleviate the risks was the whole-hearted cooperation of the people. But the Government had become the sworn enemy of the Congress and therefore rejected all suggestions to end the deadlock and to release the leaders of the people for negotiating a settlement. Consequent to this policy the appeal of the All-Parties Conference at Bombay was turned down and nobody—including Phillips, the personal representative of President Roosevelt in India, was permitted to meet Gandhiji or other Congress leaders.

XIV. The Indian National Army

The Civil Disobedience movement had been throttled even before the first step towards its start had been taken. The Congress leaders were locked up in gaols and the advocates of the non-cooperation struggle removed from the arena of action. The field was thus left free for the operations of those who had no faith in non-violence. The disturbances ensued largely because of the removal of Gandhiji's restraining and guiding influence. In this situation wherein violence and force were let loose by Government, it was not surprising that those

whose view was that violence can only be met with violence obtained ascendancy. The old revolutionary elements which had lain low so long as Gandhian principles held the field, found their opportunity. Some of them had experience of attacking railway trains, breaking up safety devices, organising raids and robberies, making explosives, and interfering with the means of communication and transport. They made full use of their knowledge and skill. Jai Prakash Narain's instructions of how to effect dislocation also suggested the programme of similar action.

But there were other elements too for whom armed resistance was a legitimate means of achieving independence, and who did not consider secret conspiracy and outrage and acts of sporadic violence against individuals as capable of bringing about the liberation of a country. They believed in organised open revolt, as had been attempted in 1857 and again during the First World War when the Khilafatists from India, the Ghadr Party in USA and the Indian Revolutionaries in Europe made great efforts to plan an uprising against the Government with the help of Turkey and Germany which, however, did not bear fruit.

The Second World War again offered an opportunity for a similar effort. The leading exponent of this method at the time was Subhash Chandra Bose. He determined to take advantage of the war in India's interest.

In 1938 when war in Europe appeared imminent Subhash Bose advocated, "India's immediate requirements were an uncompromising struggle with British imperialism and methods of struggle more effective than what Mahatma Gandhi had produced."[107] He explained, "the Indian people should not be hampered by any philosophical notions like Gandhian non-violence or any sentimentalism like Nehru's anti-Axis foreign policy."[108]

In March 1939 as the President of the Congress he proposed that an ultimatum should be given to Government to make India free within six months. The proposal was turned down by the Congress. Subhash had soon after to resign from the Presidentship. He then organised a new party which was given the significant name of the Forward Bloc. Its aim was to capture the Congress and conduct a vigorous movement against the Government.

When the war broke out he undertook a whirlwind tour of the country and addressed hundreds of meetings, openly denounced British imperialism and advised Indians not to help the British war effort. He started the civil disobedience campaign on April 6,

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[107] Bose, S. C., *The Indian Struggle*, p. 337.

[108] *Ibid.*

1940. This led to the arrest of the leaders of the Forward Bloc and on July 27, 1940 Bose himself was thrown into prison without trial. Here, deprived of action, he deliberated upon the problems of the country and arrived at three conclusions :

"Firstly, Britain would lose the war and the British Empire would break up.

Secondly, in spite of being in a precarious position, the British would not hand over power to the Indian people and the latter would have to fight for their freedom.

Thirdly, India would win her independence if she played her part in the war against Britain and collaborated with those powers that were fighting Britain."[109]

The conclusion he drew for himself was that India should actively enter the field of intrenational politics.

Feeling restless at the inactive life in prison and tormented by his thoughts he decided to do something to end this situation. He sent a protest to Government and started an indefinite fast on November 29, 1940. Thereupon the Government released him after six days and he returned home, but was kept under strict watch. On January 17, 1941, he escaped from the house and after an adventurous journey arrived in Kabul dressed as a Khalji Pathan. He stayed for a few days there and then proceeded to Moscow and then to Berlin on March 28.

The German foreign office welcomed him and gave him facilities to broadcast from Berlin to India his anti-British views. When the Germans attacked Russia in June 1941, believing in their victory, he proposed to organise an Indian army which could follow the German army to Central Asia and thence operate against the British forces on the north-western frontier.

Subhas was anxious that before his Indian legion was launched into action, he should be assured that the Axis Powers would recognise the independence of India. On this point the following extract from the diary of Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, is revealing :

"Bose would like the Axis to make a declaration on the independence of India, but in Berlin his proposals have been received with a great deal of reserve. Nor must we be compromised because the value of this upstart is not clear."[110]

Bose had a long meeting with Hitler on May 29th, when the Fuehrer poured cold water on his idea of a declaration of free India.

[109] *Ibid.*, p. 345.
[110] Ciano's Diary, pp. 354-5.

Bose came to realise that he could not accomplish much in Europe and made plans to go to Japan.

The triumphant campaign of the Japanese in the Pacific Ocean and the south-eastern Asia lands caused much excitement among the people of Indian origin living in the region. The successes of an Asiatic power over Western empires roused great hopes, which led to the formation of the Indian Independence League. The organizer of the League was Rash Behari Bose, an old revolutionary who was then residing in Japan. He convened a Conference in Tokyo on March 28-30, 1942, which decided to form the League and raise an army of Indian liberation. A second Conference for confirming these resolutions was held on a larger scale at Bangkok from 15th to 22nd June, 1942. Rash Behari Bose presided. It was finally decided to establish the Indian Independence League and to invite Subhas Bose to accept its Presidentship.

A number of resolutions were passed some of which required the acceptance of the Japanese, for instance, regarding the status of the Indian National Army and its relation with the Independence League and the Japanese Army and the control of Indian property and persons in Malaya and Burma.

A Council of Action consisting of five persons was entrusted with executive functions of the Indian Independence League. Obviously the League could exercise its authority only if the Japanese approved. Unfortunately the Japanese army commanders did not express their acceptance of either the resolutions or of the Council of Action, which led to trouble eventually.

Meanwhile the Japanese forces had attacked Malaya and defeated the British army. Captain Mohan Singh an officer in the British army who had surrendered to the Japanese was persuaded to join the Indian independence movement. The Japanese handed over the Indian prisoners of war to him. He began to organise an army of volunteers named the Indian National Army (INA or Azad Hind Fauj). Then he attended the Tokyo and Bangkok Conferences and was chosen as the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army and a member of the Council of Action.

By August 1942 a division of the INA consisting of more than 16,000 men had been raised and approved by the Japanese. Mohan Singh was keen for expanding his forces, for over 40,000 prisoners of war had signed the pledge to join INA. But the Japanese were reluctant in allowing him to do so. Besides there arose several other cases of disagreement between Mohan Singh and the Japanese military command. In addition dissensions took place within the Council of Action and its members resigned. Rash Behari Bose and Mohan

Singh fell out. Mohan Singh was dismissed from his post and interned and the INA remained in a state of suspense.

The imbroglio was ended at last. Subhas Bose accepted the offer to lead the Indian independence movement, despairing of success of his efforts in Europe. He sent a message to the Bangkok Conference where he was hailed as the leader. But the passage from Germany to the East presented extraordinary difficulties because the land routes were closed and the seas were guarded by Allied navies.

However, on February 8, 1943, he managed to slip out in a German submarine from Kiel Port. Avoiding the frequented sea lanes and making a wide detour in the Atlantic, the boat contacted a Japanese submarine four hundred miles South-South West of Madagascar. On April 28 the Japanese boat sailed under the sea to Sumatra. From here accompanied by his Japanese friend Colonel Yamamoto—whom he had met in Berlin, he flew to Tokyo on June 13.

In Tokyo he met Prime Minister Tojo and other dignitaries. What he had failed to get from Hitler and Mussolini, Tojo was persuaded to yield. The Prime Minister made a declaration in the Diet: "Japan is firmly resolved to extend all means in order to help to expel and eliminate from India the Anglo-Saxon influences which are the enemy of the Indian people, and enable India to achieve full independence in the true sense of the term."[111]

He straightened out with the Japanese all the difficulties and differences which had led to the discomfiture of the Indian Independence League and the frustration of Mohan Singh. He then returned to Singapore on July 2, and two days later formally received the Presidency of the League offered by Rash Behari Bose, and the homage of the Indian National Army.

Immediately he undertook the organisation of the Provisional Government of Free India, and to inspire the army with fresh zeal to fight for independence, he gave the stirring call :

"We have a grim fight ahead of us—for the enemy is powerful, unscrupulous and ruthless. In this final march to freedom you will have to face hunger, privation, forced marches and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours."[112]

The battle cry was 'Dilli Chalo'! 'On to Delhi.'

He assumed the command of the army and settled with the Japanese Commander in South-East Asia the role which the Indian National Army would play in the campaign on the north-east frontier of India. By intensive training the first regiment was prepared to move to Burma in November.

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[111] Toye, H. *The Springing Tiger*, p. 79.
[112] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

All the while he was engaged in setting up the Provisional Government, which was inaugurated on October 21. Bose became the Head of the State, Prime Minister and Supreme Commander of the Army. Finance, Publicity and Women Organization were entrusted respectively to A. C. Chatterji, S. A. Ayer and Lakshmi Swaminathan. Subhas was the first to take the oath :

"In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen, I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life."[113]

The members of the Cabinet followed and then the National Anthem, the composition of Tagore, was sung.

The Government was recognised by Japan, Germany and Italy besides six other states. Subhas Bose was the Head of the State, and he had a cabinet of ministers to advise him. Their first decision was to declare war on UK and USA.

The expenses of the Provisional Government and the fighting forces were first met by voluntary subscriptions and Japanese aid. But later it became necessary to make levies on Indian property of from ten to twenty-five per cent. For the training of administrative officers a Reconstruction College was opened, to promote national solidarity and secularism. Hindustani was adopted as the national language, Jai Hind as the form of greeting, the Congress tricolour as the national flag and Tagore's poem as the national anthem.

The Japanese Government handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands formally to the Provisional Free Indian Government and Subhas Bose visited them in December 1943. Then he transferred the advanced Headquarters of his Government, the Indian Independence League and the INA command to Rangoon.

On February 4, 1944, the first battalion of the Subhas Brigade left Rangoon for Arakan. In the middle of March, they had their first taste of blood defeating a contingent of the British Indian army. Then they advanced northward and in May set their feet on Indian soil at Mowdok near Cox's Bazar. But the battalion had to withdraw for want of supplies, leaving behind one Indian Company in charge of Captain Suraj Mal who bravely held on to the post against all attacks till September.

Then other Indian battalions were ordered to proceed to Chin Hills where they fought against the British army several skirmishes. Then they marched towards Kohima in the Naga Hills where they arrived in May. In conjunction with the Japanese troops they captured Kohima and hoisted the Tricolour flag on the mountain tops

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[113] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

around. Other battalions were at the same time fighting in the plains of Imphal.

But the morale of an army has to be sustained with plentiful equipment. The INA lacked air cover and artillery of its own. It did not possess even mortars. Its machine guns were only of medium size and without spares. Vital communication means were lacking as also transport and medical facilities. All these were to affect the fighting capacity of the INA.

Until May things were going on splendidly and the spirit of every one was high. But the Indian National Army commanders did not know the essential weakness of the Japanese military position on which their hopes rested. Already in 1943 the allied naval and air offensive had started both in the Southern Pacific against New Guinea and the Northern Pacific against the Aluetian and the Kurile islands. The Japanese were consequently forced to transfer many of their air squadrons from Burma to the South Pacific. The result was that they lost the mastery of air over Burma and their supplies which had to be carried by land transport through jungles and along poor roads were exposed to attacks from the air. During the rains the conditions became extremely difficult.

Thus it was that with the coming of rains at the end of May the Japanese found it impossible to stay on the advanced line which extended from the coast of the Bay of Bengal to the Naga Hills in the north. On June 7 their resistance broke. "Heavy losses, amounting to 50 per cent of the attacking troops coupled with the difficulties of road supply during the monsoon and the dangerous situation which was developing in the Mytkyina (Chinese border) area proved too much."[114] The Japanese forces and with them the INA fell back to the east bank of the Chindwin-Irrawaddy river.

The disaster to the Japanese forces, disease and starvation demoralised the INA and numerous desertions took place. Subhas Bose was dissatisfied with the Japanese for their failure to provide the essential supplies and was burning with resentment at the treatment of Indian troops. He was utterly disappointed with the blundering tactics and strategy of the Japanese High Command because he was unable to understand the real causes of the Japanese retreat. He believed that the campaign against the British forces could still be pursued with hopes of success.

In any case he determined to make another attempt to reorganise the Indian National Army and lead it in battle personally. The first INA division had disintegrated, more than half of them were dead or missing, and the majority of those who returned had to be sent to

[114] Fuller, J. F. C., Major-General, *The Second World War*, p. 216.

hospital. Bose who visited Upper Burma, in September saw this sad state of affairs. He was most hurt not by defeat, but by the treachery of some officers and many rank and file. All his efforts to uphold their morale had failed and the plan of entering India at the head of the INA seemed ruined.

In order to retrieve the position and to rectify the administration and military shortcomings displayed in the 1944 operation, he accepted the Japanese Prime Minister's invitation to proceed to Tokyo in October. The Japanese Government was helpful and acceded to the demands of Bose.

In Tokyo Bose became aware of the parlous condition of the Japanese military affairs. He discovered that the circle round Japan was growing narrower and American aeroplanes had begun bombing the country. Japan's prestige was on the wane and the Indians in south-east Asian countries were becoming apprehensive about the future. The first wave of enthusiasm for achieving India's independence was receding.

Bose found it more and more difficult to recruit men for the Army and the sources of funds were drying up. His Government had to take more and more stringent measures for collecting funds and obtaining men. But harsh methods and declining faith in Japanese victory combined to create difficulties.

The Indian Independence League was infested with dissensions which slowed down its activities. Bose had to make a tour of the region, but on this occasion he had to issue stern warnings against those who hesitated to render help, and to invoke police help to collect funds.

By December 1944, some regiments of the 2nd INA were ready to take the field. But their morale was untrustworthy. Desertions were increasing daily and many doubtful or unreliable men had to be discharged. Early in January 1945 Bose reached Burma. But the situation was now desperate. The Japanese and Indian troops had been driven out of the Arakan sector. Then in the middle of February and British army crossed the Irrawaddy river and the Indian National Army regiment had to withdraw. Many Indian ranks deserted with some officers. Discipline had grown lax and the fighting spirit had become impaired. By the middle of May the INA was completely shattered.

The credit for the success of the British forces against the Japanese was largely due to the American aid, specially airplanes, weapons and war material. The lend-lease supplies began to arrive in India in substantial quantities from 1942 onwards. Stores amounting to the

large sum of Rs. 650 crores were received both for the Indian army and the South East Command.[115]

A large number of officers and other ranks served in the India Command. Their numbers increased from 51,992 to 150,134. The strength of the Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Force in India and the South East Asia Command on February 1, 1944 was 66 RAF and 47 USAF Squadrons, with totals of 3,232 and 983 aircrafts respectively. On July 1, 1944, the figures had increased to 82 RAF and 71 USAF Squadrons, or 4,187 and 1,843 aircraft respectively.[116]

Bose who was at Rangoon received on April 20, 1945, the news that the Japanese had resolved to leave the capital. For him no other course remained open but to leave Rangoon with some of his ministers, League workers and the contingent of women of the Rani Jhansi regiment. The march started on April 24 and after a hazardous journey, moving at night and taking shelter during the day, reached Bangkok, capital of Siam, on May 15.

On August 13, he was called back to Singapore urgently and learnt that the Japanese had decided to surrender. The remnants of the INA would obviously lay down arms. Bose made necessary arrangements for the work in Singapore, and left for Bangkok on August 16, and then for Saigon. At Saigon he was offered two seats on the Japanese plane bound for Tokyo. Bose accompanied by Habibur Rahman took off in the afternoon and landed in Formosa on the 18th August. At 2 p.m. the plane took off again, but within a few minutes caught fire and crashed. Bose and Habibur Rahman struggled out of the wreck. Bose was badly burnt and was taken to the hospital. Whatever then happened, Bose was seen no more. The story of a brave son of India who constantly dreamed of its independence, who dedicated his life to its service and who blazed a new trail for achieving the goal, ended. And although success did not crown his efforts, they were not made in vain.

The Provisional Government which Bose established and the Indian National Army which he organised brought the Indian question out of the narrow domestic sphere of the British Empire into the broad field of international politics. Japan's recognition of Independent India followed by Germany, Italy and other countries had given a new status to India. China and the USA in spite of their anxiety not to annoy Britain urged it to give assent to the right of self-determination of Indians. USSR was on principle opposed to colonialism

[115] Prasad, *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War*, Indian War Economy, p. 344.

[116] Prasad, *op. cit.*, Expansion of the Armed Forces, p. 153.

and imperialism. Thus the world opinion was affected by the World War and Bose's grand endeavour.

The Indian National Army proved that the Indian soldier was not merely a mercenary, but was a volunteer who was willing to lay down his life for his country as a patriotic son of the Motherland. The officers of the Army demonstrated their ability to lead independently and their resourcefulness in meeting difficult situations. Above all the organisation of the Army set a brilliant example of communal harmony and comradeship.

The Indian National Army was a warning to India's foreign rulers that they could no longer depend implicity upon the loyalty of the Indian mercenary troops to keep India under their control. The INA was a portent.

Another lesson which it taught was that non-violent methods did not exhaust the armoury of the struggle for independence. Subhas Bose failed, he hitched his wagon to a waning star, but his successor might not be so unfortunate, and in any case the world after the Second World War was bound to be a world without the domination of the British Empire.

CHAPTER TEN

GANDHI–JINNAH TALKS

I. Jinnah's Invitation to Gandhiji

The Congress demanded freedom and unity of India. It claimed that it represented the whole of India in its composition. Its membership was open to all Indians irrespective of caste and creed. Its programme, its aspirations and its ideals embodied the interests of the entire people. If the Hindus were more numerous in its membership it was due to the fact that they were in a majority in the population, almost three times as many as the non-Hindus, and they were relatively more advanced in education and wealth and more politically conscious. The Congress stood for the freedom of all the people of India, and for equality of opportunity for all its citizens. However, it conceded the right of self-determination of a region whose inhabitants claimed the right and proved it in a democratic manner.

Of its two aims the one for immediate independence was opposed by the British rulers which created the political deadlock between the Congress and the Government.

The Muslim League seemed to be less interested in independence and more in the breaking up of the unity of the country. The Congress was prepared to accept the right of self-determination of a people on the territorial basis on condition that its inhabitants claimed the right and validated it either by a majority vote in the Legislature or by a plebiscite. Another difference between the Congress and the League was that the Congress wanted independence first and secession afterwards; the League, on the other hand, insisted upon partition before independence. The League was afraid that in an independent India it would have little chance of securing a majority of votes in any Indian province. It would succeed only with the strong support of the British in achieving its goal. So far as independence was concerned, it felt that it was unthinkable that the British should withdraw from India and retain domination over the Muslim majority provinces. Independence was, therefore, guaranteed if a part of India became self-governing, but a Muslim state carved out of India was doubtful. Therefore the League clung to the British and opposed the Congress, and produced the communal deadlock.

The political deadlock had a long history behind it, the communal deadlock was of recent development. All attempts to break them had proved unavailing so far. The latest movement of 1942 had not

yielded the desired result, for the British seemed prepared to lose India but not to transfer authority to the Congress. Encouraged by them the Muslim League remained quite obdurate.

The League, however, in spite of all its show of intransigence, lacked solidarity and strength. Its astute leader, therefore, was endeavouring during the years of the absence of the Congress from the field of action to remove its internal weakness and at the same time to manoeuvre the recognition of its demand for Pakistan by different groups and interests, and especially by the Congress.

In 1943, the Government was going all out to belittle the Congress and defame Gandhiji. Amery compared him to Father Joseph du Tremblay, *l'eminence Grise* (the grey Eminence), a devout, ascetical and pious friar of the seventeenth century who, in order to fulfil his resolve to liberate the holy land and revive the crusade against the Turks, vowed, "if in order to succour thee, I overturn the whole world, it is all too little for my wishes, to quench the fires of my ardour. I must drown me in a sea of blood."[1] Aldous Huxley in his book on Father Joseph wrote about him, "Here he was a Franciscan friar, vowed to the service of a Church which existed for the salvation of souls, but using all his own talents, all the baits of Lucifer, Mammon and Belial to induce fellow Christians to damn themselves by lying, by breaking their pledged word, by betraying the trust imposed in them. In order to do his political duty, he had to do the satanic opposite of what he had promised to do when he entered Religion."[2]

While the imaginative Amery was indulging in the flights of fanciful comparisons, the down-to-earth wiseacre Attlee was regaling the Commons with his sapient remarks. Said he, "Personally I am a Democrat. I object to the dictatorship of a reputed saint quite as much as the dictatorship of a notorious sinner."[3]

The Congress, according to its enemies, was lying prostrate under the masterful blows of the Government. The Muslim League, on the contrary, was hugged to its bosom—a friend in a time of dire need. Had not Jinnah gladdened the heart of Amery by the declaration about the civil disobedience movement, "if it had been our own Government, I would have put these people in jail in order to prevent a powerful organisation from letting loose an anti-war campaign."[4]

The circumstances offered an opportunity to Jinnah to advance the cause of Pakistan, (1) by exploiting the stalemate, and (2) by

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[1] Amery, L., Speech in the House of Commons, March 30, 1943, cited by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Congress,* Vol. II, p. 499.

[2] Comments cited in Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.,* Vol. II, p. 499.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 498.

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 511.

committing the Congress to his scheme. Success in the endeavour would give the League the much needed shot in the arm, for its position in relation to the governments of the Muslim majority provinces was not particularly reassuring.

Luckily for the Muslim League, C. Rajagopalachari who had received a rebuff from the All-India Congress Committee in April 1942, did not abandon his self-imposed task of finding a solution for the communal deadlock. He worked at a new formula for which he obtained Gandhiji's approval during the February 1943 fast. He explained, "I stand for Pakistan because I do not want the state where we Hindus and Muslims are both not honoured."[5]

Meanwhile in his presidential address at the League Conference at Delhi in April 1943, Jinnah held out an invitation to Gandhiji in these words:

"Nobody would welcome it more than myself if Mr. Gandhi is even now really willing to come to a settlement with the Muslim League on the basis of Pakistan. Let me tell you that it will be the greatest day both for the Hindus and Mussalmans. If he has made up his mind what is there to prevent Mr. Gandhi from writing to me direct ? Who is there to prevent him from doing so ? What is the use of going to the Viceroy and leading deputations and carrying on correspondence ? Who is to prevent Mr. Gandhi today ? I cannot believe for a single moment—strong as the Government may be in this country—you may say anything you like against the Government—I cannot believe that they will have the daring to stop such a letter if it is sent to me. It will be a very serious thing, indeed, if such a thing is done by the Government."[6]

Gandhiji on reading the report of the speech in the newspapers hastened to write a letter to Jinnah which he sent as a detenu to the Government for delivery to Jinnah. The letter was:

"I welcome your invitation. I suggest our meeting face to face, rather than our talking through correspondence. But I am in your hands.

I hope that this letter will be sent to you and, if you agree to my proposal, that the Government will let you visit me.....Why should not you and I approach the great question of communal unity as men determined on finding a common solution and work together to make our solution acceptable to all who are concerned with it or are interested in it ?"[7]

The Government's behaviour on receiving the letter was ridiculous,

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 506.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 507.
[7] Tendulkar, D.G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 208.

willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike. Although it called off Jinnah's bluff by refusing to transmit the letter of Gandhiji to him, it communicated the substance of the letter.

Jinnah ignored the refusal of the Government in his published reply to Gandhiji's letter and used language which must have delighted Linlithgow and Amery, because it outheroded Herod in its arrogance. Jinnah's pride was wounded, but instead of wreaking his anger on the Government which had defied his challenge, he took revenge on the prisoner who was denied all means of answering.

Jinnah wanted Gandhiji to sit at his door-step in sackcloth and ashes, retract the Congress resolution, denounce civil disobedience and condemn the events following August 8. He wrote:

"This letter of Mr. Gandhi can only be construed as a move on his part to embroil the Muslim League to come into clash with the British Government solely for the purpose of helping his release, so that he would be free to do what he pleases thereafter."

Jinnah was surely overestimating his power, for what Linlithgow, Amery and Churchill were unable to get out of Gandhiji, it was inconceivable Jinnah could. While Jinnah's jealousy and hostility towards Gandhiji personally was largely responsible for his rude and intransigent behaviour, much of his braggadocio was just put up for impressing his own people. For, in fact, he was not at all clear in his mind as to what he wanted and his ideas were quite hazy. In public he reacted violently against criticism which he could not answer, yet in private he felt miserable. He asked his old friend Kanji Dwarkadas in confidence on January 14, 1944:

"My dear Kanji, what has Jinnah done to deserve all this vituperation, misinterpretation and this misunderstanding ? Why is the Hindu press after me ? Why do your Hindu friends attribute motives to me and call me a traitor ? Why do they forget my past record of work ? Do they think I am such a fool as to play into the hands of the Government and be their tool to keep freedom away from this sub-continent ?"

Then he referred to his speech of April 1943 in which he had invited Gandhiji to write to him. He explained, "yes, I did want a letter from Gandhi and I had asked for it in my speech, but not the kind of letter that Gandhi wrote. You see, I was really working for Gandhi's release when I made that speech. If only Gandhi had written a more detailed letter on the lines indicated by me in my speech, it would have given me a handle to agitate and work for Gandhi's release. But Gandhi was, as usual, cunning and wanted to take advantage of my honest offer and I refused to get caught by him."[8]

[8] Kanji Dwarkadas, *Ten Years to Freedom*, pp. 85-6.

He went on to tell Dwarkadas what he wanted, "I am asking for Pakistan, mind you, it is only the principle that I am asking for, principle of Pakistan. What wrong have I done ? Do not the Hindus and the Hindu Congress realise that if we and they joined hands together we shall get rid of our common enemy ? Once we agree on this point and working together we are able to throw out the British, we can adjust the details and bring about an arrangement for fullest possible cooperation."[9]

Jinnah revealed his feelings towards Gandhiji in answer to the question regarding the expected improvement of chances of Congress-Muslim League compromise should Gandhiji die; Jinnah replied, "most certainly, most certainly, yes.....So long as he lives there is no prospect of coming to terms with the Muslims."[10]

II. Gandhiji's Response

Gandhiji gave an interview to Stewart Gelder, a correspondent of the *News Chronicle* of London, on July 4, 1944, at Panchgani where he was staying after release in order to recuperate his health. The interview which was spread over a number of days was in two parts. One was meant to be communicated to the Viceroy by the journalist and the second publicised for public discussion. Gelder mixed them up into a single statement which he gave to the press. Gandhiji then sent the two parts in the original for publication to the press.

The interview aroused a great deal of interest and much controversy. About this time, on July 10, Rajagopalachari published his formula. Its provisions were :

"(1) The Muslim League was to endorse the demand for independence for the transitional period;

(2) At the end of war a commission would demarcate those contiguous areas in North-West and North-East India in which the Muslims were in an absolute majority, and in those areas a plebiscite of all inhabitants would decide whether or not they should be separated from Hindustan;

(3) In the event of separation, agreements would be made for defence, commerce, communications, and other essential purposes;

(4) The terms should be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility for the governance of India."[11]

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[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Government of India, Home Department, Political (I), File No. 51/4/44. Subject : Important intercepts supplied by D.I.B. 1944 : XXI(a) Jinnah.

[11] Tendulkar, D.G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI (New edition), p. 267.

Jinnah placed the formula before the Working Committee of the Muslim League on July 30, but personally considered it unsatisfactory. He told the Committee, "Mr. Gandhi is offering a shadow and a husk, a maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan."[12]

Meanwhile Gandhiji was being pressed to meet Jinnah. Rajagopalachari was importuning him to communicate with Jinnah. Maulana Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi, the founder of the Khaksar movement, wrote a letter to Jinnah in which he stated, "My conviction is that Mussalmans and Hindus must come to an understanding at this critical moment in order to gain Pakistan as well as independence for India, but you in your fury are losing these precious moments amidst despair and inaction."[13] He sent at the same time a telegram to Gandhiji urging a personal meeting between the two. Gandhiji who yearned deeply for the communal settlement took the initiative and wrote to Jinnah, "Let us meet whenever you wish. Do not regard me as an enemy of Islam or of Indian Muslims. I have always been a servant and friend to you and to mankind. Do not disappoint me."[14]

People pointed out the dangers and untoward consequences of this course. One complaint was that Gandhiji was entrenching Jinnah's position at a time when the League ministries in the Muslim majority provinces were in a precarious predicament. The *Hindustan Times* a couple of days after the Gelder interview came out with a note by Durga Das, "Conspiracy between British diehards and Jinnah", which was based on a talk with a top Briton who told him:

"Mr. Jinnah will never come to an agreement during the war. While he is intransigent, he is on top; the moment he settles with the Congress, the latter will be on top. Once he agrees to a transitional arrangement, the League will get merged in the nationalist movement and will never be able to dictate terms to the Congress. Mr. Jinnah's intransigence suits us, and if he maintains his attitude and keeps his hands off the Punjab, which is our special preserve, he will deserve some support at the end of the war."[15]

Then Gandhiji did not sufficiently realize the significance of Jinnah's criticism of the formula. He had stated, "Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Rajagopalachari are putting the cart before the horse when they say that all these clauses can have any value or can become effective only if Britain transfers power to India."[16]

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

[13] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1944, Vol. I, p. 211.

[14] Tendulkar, D.G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 268.

[15] Durga Das, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

[16] Tendulkar, D.G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 267.

His meaning was clear, he wanted Pakistan first and independence of the two states afterwards, as against Gandhiji's view of independence first.

III. The Talks

Jinnah having accepted the proposal to meet, the talks began on September 9, at the house of Jinnah on the Malabar Hill in Bombay. The talks continued till September 27, when Jinnah announced their termination as a result of failure to reach an agreement.

Both parties addressed press conferences to justify their stand. The correspondence which passed between Gandhiji and Jinnah during the period from September 9 to 27 was published. A perusal of the letters exchanged shows that the two parties came very near one another. What prevented them from concluding a settlement was not the apparent differences between their standpoints, but the distrust and fear which lay behind the spoken and written word.

Regarding the fundamental demand of Pakistan, Gandhiji "emphasized that the Rajaji formula or the formula that he had presented conceded the substance of the League demand." But when asked why then did he not agree to the Lahore resolution, he replied because "it is based on the two-nations theory." He averred, "I urge that, apart from the two-nations theory, if I could accept the principle of the division of India in accordance with the demand of the Muslim League, he should accept it. But unfortunately it was just here we split."[17]

It is a pity that while agreeing on substance they should have broken on the theory.

Jinnah's insistence that Gandhiji should accept the two-nations theory and recognise that the Hindus and the Muslims were two different nations, was based upon the fact that among the Muslims of the north-west and the north-east the bond of religion was the only one. The Panjabis, Pathans, Sindhis and Baluchis were racially, linguistically, culturally and historically different peoples. The Bengalis not only differed in all these, but were geographically also separated from the north-western region by a distance of nearly 1000 miles, yet according to Jinnah they belonged to the Muslim nation because of their religion.

Thus to claim unity for all these heterogeneous groups he had to exalt religion as the common uniting factor. But Jinnah not only included the inhabitants of these regions in the Muslim nation, but all Muslims living in India. Gandhiji could not accept this, because it

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

was impossible to agree that the Muslims outside these two regions and living in the midst of large non-Muslim majorities, could claim a nationality different from that of the people amongst whom their lot was cast. By no stretch of imagination could the Muslim residents in the Presidency of Madras, the Uttar Pradesh (U.P. of Agra and Oudh), and in the Indian States be regarded as nationals of the territorial communities, inhabiting the north-western and north-eastern zones of India.

Gandhiji did accept the right of self-determination and secession of the two territories from India, but this did not satisfy Jinnah and he broke the negotiations, charging Gandhiji for rejecting Pakistan. His plea was that he wanted Pakistan first and then independence, while Gandhiji insisted on independence first, and secession if demanded by the majority of a mixed plebiscite. This left Pakistan in doubt.

It is surprising that Jinnah who had accepted the proposal of Cripps regarding the non-accession of Muslim provinces, discarded the almost identical offer made by Rajagopalachari and Gandhiji. The explanation possibly was :

"What must have made Jinnah reluctant to come to any definite and clear understanding with Gandhi at that time was his own position as a leader of the Muslims. In September, 1944, Jinnah was not sure whether he could produce overwhelming support for his demand among the Muslims if a plebiscite were to be held. ... Finally, as a lawyer and as a hard-headed negotiator, Jinnah could not visualize Pakistan being achieved only because the Congress and the League had agreed to divide the country. The party who had the power, namely, the British Government, was not in the picture."[18]

Another reason seems to be that while Cripps talked of provinces opting out of the Union, Rajaji and Gandhiji spoke of only of Muslim majority areas which meant a truncated Pakistan, a Pakistan smaller than one of his dreams.

Jinnah rejected the Gandhian proposals on three grounds. He wanted the partition of India on the provincial basis. This was obviously contrary to the League resolution which laid down the basic principle of constitutional plan in these words :

"That geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign."

The resolution scrupulously avoided the term 'province', spoke of

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[18] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *Pakistan, The Formative Phase* (1960), pp. 133-34.

the inclusion of areas in which the Muslims were numerically in a majority, and envisaged the territorial readjustment of the regions to bring this about.

The demand of including whole provinces was incompatible with Jinnah's theory of two nations, for the inclusion of 43 per cent non-Muslims in the Panjab and 46 per cent in Bengal would have substantially modified and diluted the dominant Muslim character of the societies of the League's conception.

The feeling behind the demand was to allay the fears of the Muslims who would be left behind in Hindustan after partition. The Hindus of the provinces under Muslim rule would provide hostages against the ill-treatment of Muslims in the Hindu majority provinces.

Concerning this new demand it may be recalled that it was habitual with Jinnah to go on swelling and augmenting his demands. As soon as a previous demand was recognised or side-stepped, new items were added. This process continued from his five-point demand in 1928 to fourteen-point demand in 1929, from provincial autonomy with residuary powers to Pakistan in 1940; from 33 1/3 per cent share in the Central Legislature and the Executive Council to parity in 1943; from independent states in the Muslim zones in 1940 to the inclusion of entire provinces in Pakistan in 1944, and lastly from Pakistan of six provinces to Pakistan with a corridor of a thousand miles in 1946.

The demand for entire provinces was preposterous and had to be given up ultimately.

The second objection of Jinnah to the Rajagopalachari plan related to the plebiscite. Jinnah held that only the Muslims had the right to vote, which was quite unreasonable, for it was a denial of the right of the minority to express its opinion. This, too, was due to lack of trust. Jinnah was not sure that he would obtain a majority in a plebiscite in which the large minority of the non-Muslims would vote, and they might win over a small section of the Muslims and thus defeat the proposal of the League. The holding of plebiscite, however, became unnecessary after the agreement on excluding the Hindu districts from the Panjab and Bengal, which considerably reduced the non-Muslim population.

The third question on which Jinnah expressed disagreement related to the proposal of a joint board to control matters of common concern, like defence, foreign relations, communications, etc. Jinnah's observation was, there could be no such common matters between two sovereign states. He appears to have been frightened lest a joint board might become an organ of unity transcending the autonomy of the states. The distrust was evaggerated. The world war had demonstrated the need of an organisation for peace, which functioned without trenching unduly upon the sovereignty of any state.

Then again alliances like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or CENTO or the Australia, New Zealand and American organisation, ANZAC, were arrangements for the common defence of sovereign states.

In any case his conception of sovereignty was Austinian, quite outdated. In mid-twentieth century where all kinds of limitations of a nation's supreme authority were coming into vogue, there was hardly any room for the exercise of absolute sovereign power. The only point was to determine what form the arrangement for the discharge of matters of common concern should take. And this was negotiable. But of the existence of such matters there could be no doubt, nor about the desirability of cooperation in dealing with them.

IV. Jinnah and Linlithgow

Jinnah confessed as much in an interview with the Viceroy on March 13, 1940. He clearly stated that the Muslims did not want His Majesty's Government to hand over the control of India to a Hindu Raj. The Viceroy then put before him three alternatives. The third one was, "there might be some tripartite arrangement by which the presence of His Majesty's Government, in a manner as little out of tune with Indian aspirations as possible, would be needed in India, longer even than some imagined. In such an arrangement Britain would have predominant responsibility for Defence."

Jinnah said "that third of these possibilities was an excellent one so far as he was concerned. . . . He was in favour of a Muslim area run by Muslims in collaboration with Great Britain."[19]

Jinnah confirmed it in his interview with the correspondent of the *News Chronicle* in February 1944. He agreed that there was no danger of a Hindu attack on Pakistan in order to restore United India, because "there would be under the new Constitution a transitional period for settlement and adjustment during which time British authority, so far as armed forces and foreign affairs were concerned, would remain paramount. The length of the transitional period would depend on the speed with which the two peoples and Great Britain adjusted themselves to the new constitution."[20]

This meant that according to Jinnah an arrangement for looking after the common concerns like defence and foreign affairs was necessary for an indefinite period after the transfer of power.

The fact of the matter was that Jinnah had so wrapped himself up

[19] Menon, V.P., *Transfer of Power in India*, p. 80.

[20] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 590.

in the glittering vision of Pakistan that he had lost all interest in India as a whole. For him an independent sovereign Muslim state was the be-all and end-all of his striving. He had not even the patience to consider the implications of his notion, the form, the moving forces, the social goals of Pakistan were kept in the background. The abstract principle of Pakistan was what mattered, everything else was incidental, immaterial.

Gandhiji's attempt was based on the belief that Jinnah was a nationalist, a lover of India. He did not realize that Jinnah had shed his nationalism so long ago as 1939, and, therefore, it was hoping for an impossibility to convert him. Jinnah's only object in holding talks with Gandhiji was to commit the Congress to Pakistan and thus doubly insure his position *vis-a-vis* the British rulers and the waverers in the Muslim community.

Gandhiji's failure provided the necessary grist to the mill of Jinnah's popularity and importance.

V. Bhulabhai Desai-Liaqat Ali Talks

But the ghost of communal harmony could not be so easily exorcised. It appeared next in the Central Legislative Assembly. In the Budget session of 1945 strangely enough the Congress party and the League party arrived at an understanding for cooperation. The result was that the two parties combined to defeat the Government over the budget. Yamin Khan, a member of the League Party, remarked in reply to the taunts of the Government benches, "the present Government had by their actions and misdeeds brought home to many people that Government were not serious when they asked the parties to join hands and that Government were only exploiting the differences. The Government's aim and endeavour was that the people of India should never unite and if they were coming together, something should be done to disunite them."[21]

On the question of cooperation in war the leader of the Congress Party and Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan, the leader of the League Party, spoke in the same strain, emphasizing that National Government and cooperation would go together.

This camaraderie led to a further development. Bhulabhai Desai drew up a set of proposals for the solution of the communal tangle. He informed the Viceroy and consulted Gandhiji who encouraged him to proceed with his efforts. The proposals were discussed with Liaqat Ali Khan and their draft was handed over to him in January 1945.

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 587.

He advised Desai to obtain for them the approval of Gandhiji and then approach Jinnah.

The next step was that Bhulabhai Desai revealed at the Provincial Political Conference at Peshawar on April 22, 1945 that there were proposals (by Desai-Liaqat Ali) before His Majesty's Government for the formation of an interim government at the Centre.

Liaqat Ali Khan thereupon published the proposal with a statement which he gave to the press. The proposal was as follows :

"The Congress and League agree that they will join in forming an interim Government in the Centre. The composition of such Government will be on the following lines :

(A) Equal number of persons nominated by the Congress and the League in the Central Executive. Persons nominated need not be members of the Central Legislature.

(B) Representatives of minorities (in particular Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs).

(C) The Commander-in-Chief.

The Government will be formed and function within the framework of the existing Government of India Act. It is, however, understood that if the Cabinet cannot get a particular measure passed by the Legislative Assembly, they will not enforce the same by resort to any of the reserve powers of the Governor General or the Viceroy. This will make them sufficiently independent of the Governor General.

The next step would be the withdrawal of Section 93 in the provinces and to form as soon as possible Provincial Governments on the lines of a coalition."[22]

This proposal known as the Desai-Liaqat Ali Pact, was never formally endorsed by the Congress or the League. On the contrary, Jinnah denied all knowledge of it and in fact frowned upon it, so that Liaqat Ali Khan had to repudiate it. The Congress leaders were in detention, but on reading about it in the papers, became furious, and poor Desai's political career was blasted.

But the formula was welcomed by Wavell and formed the basis of his recommendations about the reconstitution of the Executive Council.

While Wavell was pursuing his own plans unknown to the public, Sapru initiated a new move. He suggested that the Standing Committee of the Non-Party Conference should set up a committee to consider the points of view of the different parties, to establish contacts with the leaders of all parties, to reconcile their views and find a solution of the constitutional problem. Gandhiji welcomed the suggestion, but Jinnah refused to cooperate, and Ambedkar after acceptance, backed out.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 652.

The Committee which was nominated on December 3, 1944, reported in April 1945. Its recommendations included the formation of a national government at the centre, with parity of Hindu and Muslim members, the setting up of a constitution-making body with equal number of Hindu and Muslim members, and deciding matters with a three-fourth majority; but it ruled out the partition of India and the separate communal electorates.

The recommendations were strongly opposed both by the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders, of course, for different reasons. They were still-born.

VI. The Political Deadlock

The communal deadlock was the indirect product of British imperialist designs, the political deadlock was the direct outcome of British Government's unwillingness to part with power. By various manoeuvres they threw dust into the eyes of the world to delude it that while they were prepared to confer Dominion Status on India, the Indians were to blame for their inability to receive the generous offer, the prerequisite for which was Indian unity, but the fulfilment of the prerequisite was made impossible by Machiavellian tactics.

On the outbreak of the war the Government took the opportunity to retract from the promise of establishing a federation and granting the transfer of power under limitations and conditions which prevented power from passing into the hands of the politically advanced elements of Indian society. This reactionary step did not cause immediately any resentment because the Congress had declared the arrangements for Central Government unsatisfactory and unacceptable. But there is little doubt that both the Viceroy and the Secretary of State were either indifferent or antipathetic to the meagre relegation of authority.

Their aim was to involve India in the war, and in the name of freedom and democracy obtain India's willing and whole-hearted support for the war effort. This was too much for India to swallow, and the Congress offered to participate in the effort only on condition that India was not treated as a subordinate but as an equal. In its attempt to inveigle the Congress into submission, the Government set on foot its traditional tactics—divide Indians, encourage the Muslims by tempting inducements and stifle the Congress. The crescent card was played to neutralise the challenge of the Congress. Durga Das testifies : "This was manifest from Sikandar Hayat Khan's disclosure to me that the Viceroy, on instructions from the Secretary of State, had enjoined upon him and Fazlul Haq not to undermine Jinnah's position

as 'leader of the Muslim community'."[23] This happened towards the end of 1939.

This private confession was confirmed in a public declaration by the Secretary of State who in his speech on April 18, 1940, proclaimed : "I cannot believe that any Government or Parliament in this country would attempt to impose by force upon, for example, 80 million Muslim subjects of His Majesty in India, a form of constitution under which they would not live peacefully and contentedly."[24]

This assurance was reiterated again and again, by Prime Ministers, Secretaries of State and Viceroys, so that it became the sheet anchor of the Muslim demand. Taking advantage of this power of veto the League insisted upon the partition of India, the establishment of an independent and sovereign Pakistan and the provision of adequate safeguards for the Muslims in Hindustan.

On the one hand, the British Government was inciting the Muslim community and encouraging them to oppose the Nationalists, on the other, it was accusing the Congress for antagonising the Muslims and demanding the establishment of an irresponsible Congress-dominated Government at the Centre which was unfair to the Muslims and contrary to constitutional propriety. The accusation was tantamount to a summons for surrender to the demand of the Muslims and the will of the British.

Because the Congress was not willing to submit, the political deadlock ensued. Every attempt was then made to browbeat the Congress and from August 9, 1942, the entire armoury of repression and the overflowing cornucopia of propaganda were used to break down the resistance of the Congress.

Every time the question of a political settlement was raised the stock reply was that, let the Congress retrace its steps, recall civil disobedience, forswear the August 8 resolution, and pledge full support to the Government in the prosecution of the war, and then the Government would be pleased to consider the matter. This was the refrain of Amery's orations, the swan song of Linlithgow's farewell speech and the opening gambit of Wavell's Viceregal pronouncements.

VII. Progress of the War and Constitutional Problem

But the schemes of politicians, however cunningly framed, do not escape erosion when they collide with historical realities. After seven and a half years of a stone-walling regime at last Linlithgow retired

[23] Durga Das, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

[24] Pirzada, S. Sharifuddin, *Leaders' Correspondence with Jinnah*, p. 14.

and on October 20, 1943, Wavell was sworn in as the Viceroy of India. He had already served in India as Commander-in-Chief for two years. The situation which faced him was perplexing.

The war in the western theatre had taken a favourable turn. The Russians were driving the Germans out and forcing them to retreat on all fronts. In Italy the allied forces were slowly but surely advancing northward to Rome. The Italians had surrendered their fleet. In north Africa the German advance towards Egypt was checked, the British and Americans had landed in north Africa to drive out the Axis forces from Tunisia. The submarine menace in the Atlantic had been conquered. The Japanese were fighting a losing war in the Southern and Northern Pacific, though their armies on India's eastern border were trying to cut the communications between India and China. By the middle of 1944 victory over Germany appeared certain, and the three supreme leaders—Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill met in conference a number of times to settle not only the strategy of invasion, but also to shape the world policy for the future.

But the success in arms was creating problems of peace, and it was becoming manifest in the conferences that the final decisions would be dominated by the two super powers, USA and USSR. In the post-war world Britain would be dwarfed and would have to adjust itself to its inferior status. But whatever the position of England, the problems of the United Kingdom and of the British Empire had to be faced. Wavell in his first address to the Central Legislature on February 17, 1944, referred to the war situation and said,

"The end is certain and you may be proud of your contribution to it. When the end will come it is difficult yet to say. Germany is reeling under a series of shocks, physical and moral, which may well put her out of the ring at an early date. . . . We shall then be able to intensify the war against Japan. You realise the physical difficulties of the reconquest of Burma and of the other territory seized by the Japanese early in the war. It will be accomplished."[25] Then he pointed out, "the winning of the war is our first task, but it must not exclude preparations in the future."

Abuot the future he stated that the Draft Declaration of Cripps still stood forth as the solemn pledge of His Majesty's Government "that India shall have full control of her own destiny"; and that its proposals regarding constitution making, the rights of the minorities and the Indian States were intact. But the offer was "open to those who have a genuine desire to further the prosecution of the war and the welfare of India. But the demand for the release of those leaders

[25] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1944, Vol. I, p. 137.

who are in detention is an entirely barren one until there is some sign on their part of willingness to cooperate."[26]

About the demand for Pakistan by the Muslim League he observed, "you cannot alter geography. From the point of view of defence, of many internal and external economic problems, India is a natural unit."[27]

Concerning the Congress he remarked, "I deprole the present policy and methods as barren and impractical. ... But I see no reason to release those responsible for the declaration of August 8, 1942 until I am convinced that the policy of non-cooperation and even of obstruction has been withdrawn—not in sackcloth and ashes, that helps no one—but in recognition of a mistaken and unprofitable policy."[28]

Wavell formulated his priorities in Indian affairs in this order, war as number one, economic reconstruction as number two and post-war problems as number three. Obviously these were a soldier's preferences and not a statesman's. He should have known that both for the prosecution of war and the economic reorganisation, the political settlement was basic. It was possible to tinker with the economic troubles of India, but it was not possible to overcome them without making Indians responsible.

Similarly war effort could continue with the massive aid of the United States, but it was neither economical in expenditure of funds nor for saving of time, it was vastly extravagant in antagonising Indian opinion and therefore highly damaging to schemes of post-war settlement.

However, soon Wavell realized his mistake. The economic problems like the severe famine in Bengal showed the ineptitude of Government—Provincial, Central and His Majesty's Government in England. Their lack of foresight complacency in minimising its seriousness, administrative inadequacy and callousness were highlighted. But famine was only a symptom—a violent one indeed, of the slow economic consumption which was eating into the vitals of all Indian affairs. Agricultural backwardness, industrial stagnation, rise in prices, inflation, rapid growth of population and numerous other problems were knocking at the door which was kept shut by India's self-appointed, heedless and incompetent guardians. The immediate need was to replace them.

Politically a most intractable situation had been created by deliberate design, but its responsibility was attributed to the Indian politicians. Wavell by his speech annoyed both the Congress and the League. He castigated the Congress leaders for adopting a barren and

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 140-2.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*

impractical course, as if the British Government had left any other course open for a self-respecting people. On the other hand, while Amery and Linlithgow were gloating over their concession of Pakistan to the Muslim League, Wavell was announcing his discovery of the geographical unity of India, and yet propounding the soundness of the War Cabinet's proposal of the partition of India. The postulation of such contradictory propositions in the same speech was amazing. Obviously behind public promises there was no real desire to implement them.

Churchill anticipating the impending destruction of the German might was occupied with the plans of invasion and post-war national and international reconstruction. He was relieved of the pressure of the Indian problem both because of the favourable war situation and the fading of America's interest, on account of the increasing tempo of the war in the Pacific and the opening of the campaign in Europe in the immediate future.

But whatever Churchill might think, Wavell was confronted with a desperate situation which needed immediate attention. The deteriorating economy was supplying fuel to the political fire which had been pushed under the ground but was not put out, and could throw up flames at any moment. The atmosphere of despair, futility and helplessness which was widespread augmented disaffection, bitterness and distrust.

Then the Government had given solemn pledges to effect immediately after the war the transfer of self-government of the Dominion model and initiate the process of constitution making. All the political parties—the Liberal Federation, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikhs and others were becoming restive and importunate.

The time was ripe for making plans. The political deadlock needed immediate attention. But the Congress leaders in prison were not prepared to oblige the Government by pleading guilty for what they had not done. They were, therefore, not available. The Muslim League knowing that the Government would not resile from its plighted word, was more implacable than ever before, and indeed was inflating its claims. The nationalists outside the Congress, the Mahasabhaites and the Sikhs were adamant in their rejection of the League claims. Jinnah had failed to obtain Gandhiji's approval for his demands.

In the Legislative Assembly the resentful Congress and League parties—adversity making strange bedfellows, combined to exhibit their anger by defeating the Government.

These postures were the direct result of the deliberate policies of the Government and at last the chicken had come home to roost.

VIII. Wavell Plan

Wavell was soon convinced what Government had entangled Government must disentangle. Otherwise too the signs of change were conspicuous.

Gandhiji in his interview had stated that the position in 1944 was quite different from that in 1942, and therefore he no more demanded complete independence now on which he had insisted then. This was "a remarkable change of front" as Lord Strabolgi remarked in the House of Lords. The Desai-Liaqat Ali Pact was equally an unexpected compromise for the Congress in so far as it accepted parity in the Executive Council, which was endorsed by the Sub-Committee of the Non-Party Leaders Standing Committee.

Although Amery rejected Gandhiji's proposals in his House of Commons speech of July 28, 1944, Wavell made up his mind to take the initiative. So he called a conference of the Governors of all the provinces in August 1944, and placed before them his own views. The Governors agreed with him that the Government should take positive steps as soon as possible to resolve the political problem.

The tentative plan of the Viceroy was to assemble a conference of the principal leaders of the parties besides Gandhiji and Jinnah, and discuss with them the composition of the transitional government. Following Desai-Liaqat Ali formula he proposed a Council with equal numbers of Hindus and Muslims, and one representative each of the Sikhs and the Depressed Classes, besides the Commander-in-Chief and the Viceroy. Of course the Council would function under the Act of 1935. The Council, apart from its immediate duties concerning the administration and especially the prosecution of the war and the making of peace, would consider the composition of the constitution-making body. The conference would also indicate the means of reviving responsible governments in the provinces under Section 93.

If the conference agreed upon the composition and names of the Executive Council, the members would take office after the approval of His Majesty's Government. The formation of the regular provincial governments would immediately follow. The Executive Council would make proposals for the framing of the new constitution and negotiate with the Princes for their place in it.

The scheme was submitted to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State pointed out certain defects in the scheme, but agreed that the situation could not be allowed to drift. So, he made counter proposals, in which the Congress and the League were shown little consideration.[29]

Wavell expressed strong disapproval. Then Amery suggested an

[29] Menon, V.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 168-70.

almost revolutionary plan—give to the present Government of India the status of a Dominion, abrogate the authority of the Parliament to legislate for India, and thus concede India's demand for independence at once. The Viceroy did not consider the plan practicable and addressed a letter directly to Churchill.[30]

In view of the urgency of the matter he asked the permission of the Secretary of State to visit England and personally discuss his proposals with the Government of England. After much procrastination Wavell was at last invited to England which he reached on March 23, 1945. He remained in England till the end of May discussing the proposals with the Secretary of State and the Indian Committee of the Cabinet. Churchill remained sceptical about the proposals of Wavell, but Amery and Cripps persisted and he reluctantly agreed to the idea of the Conference because "after all we ar'nt giving anything away."

IX. THE SIMLA CONFERENCE

The landing of the allied armies on the coast of Normandy on June 6, 1944 was the beginning of the campaign which ended on May 7, 1945 with the unconditional surrender of the German Chief of Staff. About the same time the Russians had captured Berlin and in the south the allied armies had destroyed the resistance of the enemy and occupied Itlay.

In the east the Japanese were driven out of Burma, but although their defeat was not in doubt their resistance was still continuing. The main base for war operations had, therefore, shifted to India as the High Command turned its exclusive attention to the Far East. But as the war was approaching its end, fissures began to appear both in the Government of England and in the Grand Alliance.

The Labour Party had no intention of continuing in the coalition Government beyond the termination of war against Germany. Even during the peak years of conflict it was devoting attention to the problems of the post-war England, and had actually made a general statement of policy in the pamphlet "The Old World and the New Society". It started talking about the next election and the socialist programme which would be placed before the electorate. During the election campaign the Labour leaders like Greenwood, Bevin and Laski expressed their opinion that in case the Party came into power it would end the political deadlock in India.

On the other hand the Conservative Party was less acutely seized of the problems of reconstruction. Its leader Churchill was so engrossed

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

in the problems of war, attending was conferences at home and abroad, and trying to maintain the direction of the war in his hands that he could not give much attention to the internal problems of England.

Inside the coalition Government differences between the Labour members and the Conservatives were becoming accentuated, for instance, the question of Social Security which was taken up enthusiastically by the Labour Party received scant support from the Conservatives. Another outstanding matter concerned planning.

These controversies made an appeal to the electorate necessary. Churchill wanted an early election in order to cash in on his immense reputation as the architect of victory. He broke up the coalition on May 25 and formed a new Government consisting of the Conservative ministers and some Liberals. The general election was held on July 25 and the results declared on July 26. The electorate gave to the Labour Party a landslide victory, 393 Labour candidates won against 213 of the Conservative Party and their allies, 19 of the other parties and 14 Independents. Attlee became Prime Minister and took over charge immediately.

The Alliance, too, was showing signs of serious differences of aims, especially between Britain and USSR. The future of Poland and of Eastern European countries generally, of the Baltic States, of Berlin, etc. caused divergence of views. Churchill was very suspicious of the Russian objectives and ambitions, and was warning Roosevelt against Russian advance in Germany and capture of Berlin. The Russians were equally distrustful of the British designs in the Balkans.

But ever since the United States had entered the war the influence of Britain in the War Councils was on the wane, and the tremendous victories of the Russians over the German forces diminished it still further. Churchill felt frustrated, for his warnings and proposals regarding allied strategy were treated with scant attention. In the last Conference held at Potsdam from July 17 to August 2, the alliance appeared to be crumbling down. Churchill bewailed, "We British have had very early and increasingly to recognize the limitation of our powers and influence, great though it be, in the gaunt world arising from the ruins of the hideous war."[31]

The meeting of the allied statesmen at Dumbarton Oaks in August 1944, had considered some of the problems posed by the war, and laid the foundations of the United Nations Organisation. These proposals were considered at the San Francisco Conference, April 25–June 26, 1945. The Russian Foreign Minister Molotov, raised the question of the propriety of the presence of the Indian delegates at the Conference.

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[31] Havighurst, A.T., *Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 356.

He said, "We have at this Conference an Indian Delegation but India is not an independent state. We all know that the time will come when the voice of an independent India will be heard too."[32]

In another statement he observed, "that from the viewpoint of the interests of international security, we must first see that dependent countries are enabled as soon as possible to take the path of national independence. This should be promoted by a special organisation of the United Nations which must act with a view to expediting the realization of the principle of equality and self-determination of the nations."[33]

The repercussions of these dramatic events in India were exciting. Gandhiji issued a statement on April 18 in which commenting on the aims and objects of the San Francisco Conference he pleaded :

"Exploitation and domination of one nation over another can have no place in a world striving to put an end to all war. ....An indispensable preliminary to peace is the complete freedom of India from all foreign control, not merely because it is a classic example of imperialist domination but specially because it is a big, ancient and cultured country, which has fought for its freedom since 1920, deliberately by truth and non-violence as its only weapon."[34]

The state of the world was fluid, and Britain was in the midst of a revival of controversial party politics and in the throes of Governmental change, when Wavell returned from England and sought to unravel the knots of India's political impasse. The time, however, did not appear promising. But on June 14, Wavell announced his intention to call a Conference of the party leaders at Simla for the purpose of taking their advice regarding the political and constitutional arrangements :

(1) the settlement of the communal issue, which is the main stumbling block in the way of advance;

(2) the formation of a new Executive Council more representative of organised political opinion. The proposed Council would represent the main communities and would include equal proportions of caste Hindus and Muslims. It would work if formed under the existing constitution. But it would be an entirely Indian Council, except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, who would retain his position as War Member.

(3) The functions of the new Executive Council would be : (a) to prosecute the war, (b) to carry on the Govern-

[32] Sitaramayya, P., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 656.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] Tendulkar, D.G., *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 2-3.

ment of India, and (c) to consider the means by which a new permanent constitution could be agreed upon, and the long-term solution was facilitated.

(4) the portfolio of the Member for External Affairs which the Viceroy was holding would be transferred to an Indian member.

On the same day Amery made a statement in the House of Commons. He reiterated Wavell's declaration and expressed the anxiety of His Majesty's Government to contribute towards the breaking of the political deadlock. He had therefore considered what could be done in the interim period, under the present constitution, pending the formulation by Indians of their future constitutional arrangements, which would enable the parties and interests to cooperate together and with the British Government in order to promote the good of the Indian people as a whole.

He made it clear that the Cripps proposals were still valid in their entirety, which meant that it was open to India on transfer of power to remain like the Dominions within the British Commonwealth or secede from it.

The Viceroy also announced that orders had been issued for the immediate release of the members of the Congress Working Committee in detention.

On hearing the broadcast of the Viceroy Gandhiji immediately entered into correspondence with him in order to obtain clarification of his statement. He asked him to explain why independence was not mentioned in the speech. The Viceroy's reply was that the goal of Dominion Status with the option to leave the Commonwealth which had been accepted by the Government was virtually equivalent to independence.

The second objection was the use of the phrase 'Caste Hindus'. Gandhiji strongly repudiated the classification and informed the Viceroy that there could be no representation of such a group.

In the third place he objected to the treatment of a political question on the basis of religion and community, and considered the acceptance of parity between Hindus and Muslims as such totally unacceptable.

The Viceroy assured Gandhiji that the term 'Caste Hindus' had no other significance except "Hindus who did not belong to Scheduled Castes". So far as the matter of parity was concerned it was only a suggestion which was open to acceptance or rejection by the Conference.

Gandhiji had also drawn the Viceroy's attention to the fact that he belonged to no organisation and was not even an ordinary member of the Congress. He could not therefore attend as a representative

of the Congress, but only act as an adviser. He urged upon him to invite the President of the Congress to the Conference.

The Congress Working Committee met on June 21 and 22 to discuss the Viceroy's proposals and resolved to accept the invitation to attend the Simla Conference on June 25. It agreed to parity as a temporary measure for the interim government only.

The Muslim League had little interest in the Wavell Plan. Khaliquzzaman, a favourite of Jinnah and an outright advocate of Pakistan, was of opinion, "I thought that to bring an interim Government into power without an agreement on our basic demand would be detrimental to us."[35]

The Working Committee of the Muslim League raised a number of objections against the plan. The two important ones were :

(1) It asserted that the list to be submitted by the Muslim League should be final and that the Viceroy's demand for a panel of names was unjustified;

(2) It claimed that the Muslims in the Cabinet should all be Muslim Leaguers.

The Hindu Mahasabha was not included in the list of parties asked to participate in the Conference. It was naturally aggrieved, and strongly opposed the proposal of parity.

A day before the opening of the Conference the Viceroy met Gandhiji and Jinnah separately.

The conference which met at Simla on June 25, included the premiers of the provinces where popular ministries were functioning, the ex-premiers of the provinces ruled by Governors under Section 93 of the Act of 1935, the Presidents of the Congress and the Muslim League, the leader of the Congress Party, the deputy leader of the League Party in the Legislative Assembly and the Congress and League leaders in the Council of State, the leader of the Nationalist Party and of the European group in the Assembly, one representative of the Scheduled Castes and one of the Sikhs. Gandhiji though present at Simla did not attend the Conference.

The Viceroy in his short inaugural speech after welcoming the invitees explained the purpose of the Conference. He said : "It is not a constitutional settlement, it is not a final solution of India's complex problems that is proposed. Nor does the plan in any way prejudice or prejudge the final issue. But if it succeeds, I am sure it will pave the way towards a settlement and will bring it nearer."[36]

The discussion was opened by Abul Kalam Azad, President of the Congress. He emphasized the national character of the Congress

[35] Khaliquzzaman, C, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 527.

[36] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1945, Vol. I, p. 239.

which refused to be a party to any arrangement that prejudiced its national character or reduced the Congress to the level of a communal body, and tended to impair the growth of nationalism. He also demanded that the barriers between the States' people, the princes and the national government should be removed; the army should be given a national character. He reiterated the Congress goal of independence.[37]

Jinnah asserted that the Muslim League could not in any circumstances agree to a constitution on any basis other than that of Pakistan; its attitude was fundamentally opposed to the Congress demand for a united India and a common central government. He claimed the footing of equality for the League for the setting up of a provisional government. But he did not ask that Pakistan should be immediately conceded. In regard to the Muslim League's claim he held that it represented 90 per cent of the Muslims, as the Congress represented 90 per cent of the Hindus. It was wrong to suggest that the Congress had a hold over all communities.[38]

On June 26, the Viceroy put two sets of questions before the Conference—Part A, relating to the scheme of the new Executive Council as explained in his declaration of June 14; Part B, relating to the strength and composition of the Council and the method of submitting panels of names for the Council to the Viceroy to enable the Viceroy to make his choice for appointments.

On the first part the main divergence of opinion concerned the question of parity, but on the whole parity was not denounced. On the second part it was decided to adjourn the Conference to give the Congress and the League opportunity to come to a settlement by informal talks.

The talks failed. Wavell then suggested that the Congress and the League should send him a list of their nominees not less than 8 and not more than 12, the Scheduled Castes four, and the remaining delegates three each. But they could add names outside their parties. On receiving the list, he would attempt to form on paper an Executive Council of his own conception, but before putting his proposals before the Conference he would consult the leaders of the parties.

The Congress President accepted the Viceroy's proposal and after consulting the Working Committee submitted a list on July 6. Jinnah made to the Viceroy on July 7 three suggestions—(1) the League should not submit a panel but its representatives should be chosen on the basis of a personal discussion between him and the Viceroy; (2) that all the Muslim members should be chosen from the League; and

[37] Menon, V.P., *op. cit.*, p. 196.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

(3) that some effective safeguard other than the Viceroy's veto should be provided to protect Muslim interests from majority decisions of the Council.

On the 8th July the Viceroy saw Jinnah and discussed his three suggestions, and on the 9th wrote to him that he could not give any guarantee that the Muslim members would be nominated exclusively from Muslim League. On this Jinnah refused to submit any list.

On his refusal Wavell drew up his own list which he showed to Jinnah on 11th July. It contained four representatives of the Muslim League and one Muslim from the Unionist Party of the Panjab, thus assuring not only parity between Muslim and Hindu communities, but also parity between the League and the Congress. Jinnah demurred. He would not accept any Muslim from outside the League nor would he join the Council unless there was a special safeguard for Muslims in the Council. Wavell did not agree to the two conditions. He told Jinnah that this implied the failure of his plan and that he would inform the Conference.

Before the announcement of the breakdown Wavell informed Francis Mudie, Evan Jenkins, and his constitutional adviser, V. P. Menon, "that he had been in communication with the Secretary of State and that it had been decided that the proposals should not be proceeded with."[39]

In fact this rejection of the Wavell proposal was the parting contribution of the Conservative Secretary of State supported by the Conservative Churchill to the solution of the Indian problem, "one of the last memorable acts of Mr. Amery before he handed over charge of his office to Lord Pethick Lawrence."[40]

Although overruled from above Wavell told Gandhiji that in view of the unwillingness of the Muslim League to cooperate, except on its own terms, the Conference had failed.

Gandhiji's advice was that in view of the disagreement it was necessary that the Government should decide between the two parties. The Viceroy expressed unwillingness to impose a settlement. On July 14, at the last session of the Conference, the Viceroy made a statement in which he accepted the responsibility for the failure of the Conference. He said that he had made every possible effort to achieve success. While all others had given him lists of persons from whom to choose members of the Council, the Muslim League declined to do so. Then he prepared his own list, but "when I explained my solution to Mr. Jinnah he told me that it was not acceptable to the Muslim League, and he was so decided that I felt it would be useless to continue the discussions."

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[39] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 208.
[40] Khaliquzzaman, C., *op. cit.*, p. 328.

X. The Causes of Failure

The Conference had failed but it is relevant to enquire the reasons of the failure. What party was responsible for the breakdown and what considerations led to this unfortunate situation? The main factors concerned in the fate of the Conference were three—the Congress, the League, the Viceroy.

Jinnah justified his attitude in a statement which he made at the press conference where the various parties explained their points of view. After Azad had spoken, putting the blame mainly on the Muslim League, without absolving the British Government, Jinnah said the Muslim League had agreed to participate in an interim government at the Centre on two conditions—(1) that separate Muslim states would be established in Muslim majority provinces after the war, and (2) that the Muslims, being not a minority but a nation, would be accorded equality of numbers in the Executive, *i.e.* half the total membership of the Council. These conditions were turned down by Wavell. In the circumstances to have accepted the arrangement suggested by the Viceroy would have been an abject surrender of all they stood for, and the death-knell of the Muslim League. He finally argued: "if we accept the arrangement, the Pakistan issue will be shelved and put into cold storage indefinitely, whereas the Congress would have secured under the arrangement what they want, namely, a clear road for their advance towards securing a Hindu national independence of India." [41]He quoted Amery's authority for his stand. The latter had said in the House of Common, "any interim advance, therefore, must in no way prejudge the question whether an ultimate settlement is based on a united or divided India."

The statement of Jinnah does not shirk the responsibility for bringing about the failure of the Conference. But his zealous satellites wanted to go one better than their leader. Khaliquzzaman thought "the main party responsible for the break-up was the Congress", because it had the temerity to repudiate Jinnah's charge that it was a Hindu communal organisation. He hauled Azad over the coals for suggesting that if Wavell's list had been approved it would have given seven Muslims to the Executive Council. Zaman groused that only four of them would have been Muslim Leaguers. In fact five would have been Leaguers, one Congressman and one Panjab Unionist. Apparently he held that non-Muslim Leaguer Muslims were not Muslims.

However not all Muslims, among them even those who belonged

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[41] Saiyad, M. H., *M. A. Jinnah: A Political Study* (2nd edition 1951, reprinted 1962), p. 401.

to the League, agreed with Jinnah. Husain Imam, the leader of the Muslim League Party in the Council of State confided to V.P. Menon his feeling of distress over the imminent breakdown and conveyed "the impression that the members of the Working Committee of the League were far from unanimous in rejecting the Viceroy's offer." Husain Imam suggested that "the Viceroy was not aware that a member of his own Executive Council was advising Jinnah to stand firm[42]." It may be surmised with a degree of certainty that this member was in touch with Amery and agreed with Churchill that "we aren't giving anything away." The success of Wavell's plan was likely to end in giving almost everything away—independence as well as unity.

Dr. Sayeed, contrary to Zaman, held "it was clear that despite Lord Wavell's statement that the responsibility for the failure of the Conference was his, it was Jinnah's uncompromising attitude which wrecked the Conference."[43] According to the writer there were a number of reasons why Jinnah wrecked the Conference. In the first place, Jinnah and the Working Committee were utterly opposed to Wavell's proposal to include a Unionist Muslim, specifically Khizr Hayat Khan, in the Executive Council. "He knew that once it became clear to all the Muslim leaders and particularly the Muslim leaders of Panjab that they were not likely to get any prize offices by remaining outside the Muslim League they would all have to flock to the Muslim League."[44]

Another probable reason was that Jinnah's claim that the Muslim League was the sole representative organisation of the Muslims had not yet been established. The Muslim League had grown popular. The growth of the popularity of the Muslim League is borne out by the by-elections which took place after 1937. Between 1937 and 1943 there were 61 by-elections to Muslim seats in the provincial legislatures; of these the League won 47. In the by elections for the Central Legislative Assembly the League won 7 out of 14. Between 1943 and 1945, the League won 8 out of 11 provincial by-elections and all the 4 by-elections for the Central Assembly. "But it was still not strongly entrenched in so far as the Provincial Governments in Muslim majority provinces were concerned."[45]

The North-West Frontier Province was under a Congress Ministry. Bengal was under Section 93, and the Panjab had a Unionist Ministry. The Ministry in Sind was headed by a Leaguer who depended upon Congress support.

Jinnah who was conscious of his growing popularity with the masses expected to capture the governments as a result of fresh elections. In

[42] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 215.
[43] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 140-41.

the Panjab he was confident that with the help of the officials—British and Muslim, he would sweep away the Unionist Ministry. The ground had already been prepared. Jinnah had expelled Khizr Hayat Khan from the League and created a rift in the Muslim ranks which started the process of disintegration of the party. The death of Chhotu Ram, the leader of the Hindu Jats and the main pillar of the Unionists, further weakened the Party.

The Muslim League was thus not particularly anxious to facilitate the success of the Conference for good reasons of its own. The wonder is why it agreed to join the Conference at all, for its claim that they were the organ of a separate nation and its insistence to be treated on the basis of equality with the rest of India. ill consorted with the idea of a common government. Two nations may become allies and establish common arrangements—ordinarily temporary, for specific common purposes, but it is unthinkable to constitute a combined government of two separate nations even for a short period. However, shortly after the opening of the Conference Jinnah realised his initial mistake and then followed a course which was bound to break it up.

It is quite puzzling to find the reasons which led Wavell to close the Conference abruptly and confess his defeat. Why did Wavell capitulate to Jinnah and especially on the inclusion of Khizr Hayat Khan in the new Council? Hodson has pointed out the choice of the Viceroy was entirely unreasonable. "Mr. Jinnah's control of the Muslim League was at that time far from complete. The Unionist Party was still strong, and Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan favoured a settlement. There were still many uncommitted Muslims in the country. It is arguable that if the Vicerory had been as adamant as Mr. Jinnah, the latter would have been obliged to give in, that the destruction of the Unionist Party would have been averted; and that an effective all-community political Government of India would have operated for the rest of the war and perhaps for sometime afterwards. Right or wrong, the moment was a critical one in the whole story."[46]

The fatal weakness in Wavell's case was the antipathy of Winston Churchill to the Wavell plan which presaged the transfer of power to Indians. The coalition government of England had ended on May 25, and a purely Conservative government had come into power. Churchill expected to win the election in July and continue in office. He had no intention either to preside over the liquidation of the Empire or to let down the Muslim community which had stood by England during the war. Jinnah's advisers knowing this, encouraged him in maintaining an unbending attitude. They proved right, for when Wavell consulted Amery on his list which by-passed the League, he was promptly ordered to desist from offending the League. Says Hodson:

[46] Hodson, H. V., *Divide and Quit*, pp. 124-25.

"Unless the Viceroy was willing to contemplate a Government politically dominated by the Congress he could neither proceed straight to this conclusion nor credibly use its possibility to twist Mr. Jinnah's arm. Such a result, it is clear, was not part of the plan that he had so laboriously agreed with His Majesty's Government. Their consent to proceed with it was very far from assured. In the first place they had never been enamoured of Lord Wavell's thesis that the egg must hatch into the hen, that a politicalised Government of India was the required first step towards reaching a long-term solution, and they had accepted it only on the assumption that all the main political elements were brought into such a Government."[47]

The intervention of Amery proved that the British rulers regarded the Congress as their enemy and, therefore, were not prepared to entrust it with power as Wavell intended. Evidently the greatest block on the road to independence was still British antipathy and distrust—at least that of the Conservative ruling faction.

Jinnah was the chief beneficiary of Wavell's discomfiture. He had humiliated the principal representative of the British Crown in India. He had made his enemies lick the dust—Khizr Hayat Khan and his Unionist Party, the hot favourities of the Government of India. He had lowered the prestige of the Congress and had succeeded in forcing the Congress to recognize parity with the Muslim League.

Jinnah rode roughshod over the sentiments of the other participants of the Conference and assumed an uncompromising attitude because he was only concerned in defeating the purpose of the Viceroy and the Congress to instal an interim government in which the Muslim League was bound to be in a minority. His eyes were set upon the goal of Pakistan and he cared little for the distractions of a temporary unified government of all India which might prove a snare, and break the solidarity of the community.

It is not surprising that Jinnah emerged from the Simla Conference elated with his triumph and elevated in the eyes of his community as the conquering hero. No one—least of all Jinnah in his exalted mood, cared to recognise that all the trappings of glory were gifts from the British storehouse.

The Congress part in the Conference was comparatively subdued. The Congress in 1942 had held the flag of national self-respect aloft and pitched its demands high. It had claimed complete self-government as its long-term goal—independence for the whole of India, and democratization of Indian States. It had insisted upon immediate establishment of a cabinet form of Government at the centre, with almost all departments of administration transferred to the representa-

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

tives of the Indian political parties and with the Viceroy as a mere figurehead, shorn of all powers. Apparently the Congress was bidd ng for high stakes because its estimate of the power of Britain to stand up against the Axis onslaught was low. Gandhiji compared the Empire to a bank in liquidation. The calculation was wrong.

In 1942 in spite of the crushing defeats on land and sea in Asia, Europe and Africa, Britain had not succumbed to the German air invasion, and was gradually mastering, with American aid, the submarine menace. Above all its will to resist was hard as steel and Churchill was not indulging in verbal pyrotechnics when he declared the resolve of the English people "to fight the enemy in the streets and in the fields, on the sea beaches and from across the seas, but would never surrender."

In 1942, the Congress prestige and influence were high. The Governments of China and USA were earnestly pressing the cause of Indian independence which the British could not ignore. The Muslim League did not pull any weight with the community. Its ideal of Pakistan was not taken seriously in any of the Muslim majority provinces. Jinnah seemed to plough a lonely furrow.

The Labour Party in Parliament and its representatives in the coalition Government seemed anxious for a settlement. Yet the Congress unmindful of the advantageous situation rejected Cripps offer.

In 1945, the state of affairs had completely changed. Britain's most powerful enemy Germany had been defeated, and Japan was on the run, but Britain's internal condition and world position had vastly deteriorated. It had suffered such terrible losses that its economy was in complete disarray. Industry was in a chaotic state, foreign trade had dwindled, the country was living on the aid extended by USA, financial bankruptcy was threatening. Britain's counsel carried less weight in world affairs which was now becoming dominated by super powers. There was a sense of exhaustion and loss of pride. Britain was bereft of its elan for war. Thus compared with 1942 the state of England in 1945 was less cheering.

But if the estimate of the Congress was wrong in 1942, in exaggerating Britain's predicament on the one side, it was equally wrong in 1945 but in the other direction. The overdrawn estimate of Abul Kalam Azad was hardly justified. He thought, "once the war was over, the British would have no special reason to seek our cooperation. It was therefore not advisable for us to reject Lord Wavell's offer" although it was less generous than that of Cripps; for there was no provision in it for a long term solution, no promise of complete independence, no transfer of the war portfolio, no surrender of Viceroy's veto

or other powrs, and unlike the Cripps offer a proposal to treat the Congress and the League on terms of equality.

On the other hand, unnoticed by the Congress, because its leaders were in gaol, the Muslim League had taken advantage of the vacuum, and with the benignant cooperation of the Government, to advance in organisation and strength by rapid and gigantic steps. Its claim to be the sole representative of Muslim India could no longer be challenged. Its demand for Pakistan had to be considered seriously, although the two-nation theory created unnecessary confusion both for the League and the Congress. However wrong the theory, the right of self-determination for the territories with Muslim majorities in population had acquired validity.

Therefore although Jinnah's claim to speak on behalf of the Muslim majority regions should not have been disputed, his claim to represent the Muslims in the rest of India was irrelevant. For while the first had a legitimate right to self-determination and separate nationality, the latter had no such right and could not ask for recognition as a separate national entity. Jinnah could not possibly be treated as the national of both the proposed Pakistan as well as Hindustan (India).

In the circumstances, Jinnah showed little interest in the interim united India government.

In accepting Wavell's offer the leaders of the Congress seemed to show that they were tired of the struggle and were anxious to arrive at a settlement on the terms proposed. Jinnah, on the other hand, was confident and aggressive. Even before the Conference he was sure of the Muslim electorate's support and was eagerly looking forward to fresh elections.

He welcomed the break-up of the Conference and the deadlock remained unresolved.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE CABINET MISSION AND AFTER

I. Labour Government's Stand on the Indian Problem

Within a fortnight after the termination of the Simla Conference the Churchill Government resigned and on July 26 Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party, was installed in office. The unexpected change of government marked a wide shift in British public opinion. Churchill's reputation stood high in the estimation of his countrymen as the organizer of victory. But there was among the English people wide-spread war weariness, a desire for change from the gory occupation of killing and destroying and a yearning for home and peaceful living.

For the first time in history the Labour Party had secured the majority of seats in the House of Commons and seized power from the Conservatives. The Labour success inevitably had repercussions in India. The Nationalists and many Congressmen were pleased. The Labour Party professed radical and socialist principles and had ordinarily supported India's aspiration for self-government. It was expected that the new government would help India in attaining its goal.

On the other hand, the Muslim Leaguers were unhappy. According to Khaliquzzaman "the replacement of Mr. Amery by Lord Pethick-Lawrence all the more convinced the Muslims that the Labour Party did not mean business with them."[1] The King's Speech at the opening of the new Parliament, however, by using the phrase "My Indian peoples", gave some hope that, after all, the Labour Party might not turn out to be wholly hostile to the Muslim cause.

The jubilation of Abul Kalam Azad who cabled his felicitations to Attlee and Cripps and who felt optimistic about the outcome of Labour Party's dealings with the problem of India was uncalled for, and the fears of the Muslim League were equally ill-founded. The Labour attitude in the matter was different in one respect and identical in another, with the Conservative point of view. The Conservatives followed the maxim "divide and rule", the Labour Party "divide and quit".

The Labour Party was as much annoyed with the non-co-operation of the Congress as the Conservatives—as the speeches of Attlee and Arthur Greenwood testified. It fully agreed with Cripps—a prominent member of the Labour oligarchy, in the belief that the Congress

[1] Khaliquzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

was seeking power for itself, and a number of Labour leaders wanted to proceed cautiously and by stages towards the goal of Dominion Status. Probably the apprehension lurked in their minds that the Indian bourgeoisie would not be fair to the Indian labour. On the Indian side, amongst prominent Congress leaders, Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru were sceptical of the attitude of the Labour Party. For, neither Prime Minister Attlee nor Secretary of State Pethick-Lawrence, nor the Labour expert on Indian affairs Cripps, made any secret of the fact that they had no desire to depart from the proposals of the War Cabinet conveyed in 1942, in the matter of the pledge given to the Muslim majority provinces that they could opt out of the Indian Union if they so wished.

Soon after the Labour Party's assumption of office the Americans dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9) and all Japanese resistance ceased, and on August 15 the victory day was celebrated by the Allies.

As the war against Japan was coming to an end the problem of an interim government during the war ceased to be a live issue, and Wavell had to take immediate steps to find a solution for the long-term settlement. On August 1, he convened a conference of the Governors of the provinces who advised the desirability of holding fresh elections for the Central Legislative Assembly and the provincial legislatures. On August 6, Jinnah made a speech in which he stressed the need of immediate elections and repeated his demand for Pakistan. The Congress also wanted a general election without delay.

In pursuance of the general approval, the Viceroy of India and the Secretary of State in England announced on August 21, that the elections would be held in the coming cold weather. The Labour Government which, in spite of its involvement in the post-war problems, was keen on settling the Indian question, invited Wavell to England for discussions. On August 24, Wavell accompanied by Evan Jenkins, his Private Secretary, and V. P. Menon, Constitutional Adviser, left for London. They had meetings with the Secretary of State and the India Committee of the Cabinet and thrashed out the various aspects of the future constitution and the procedure by which the constitution was to be framed.

Wavell had two alternative solutions for the Indian problem—"one, to hold India down by force", for which purpose he would require thousands of additional British troops, and the other to pass on the responsibility for government to the representatives of the people.

Attlee was, however, clear in his mind that "Britain must quit."[2] The first alternative was entertained only by Churchill.

[2] Durga Das, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

II. New Wavell Proposals

On September 16, Wavell returned to India and on 19th September made the important announcement on behalf of His Majesty's Government, firstly, that it was intended to convene as soon as possible the constitution-making body, and immediately after the elections to ascertain from the representatives of the Legislative Assemblies in the provinces, "whether the proposals contained in the 1942 declaration are acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme is preferable;"[3] secondly, that it was intended to consult the representatives of the Indian States in what way they could take part in the constitution-making body; thirdly, that the government were considering the draft of a treaty which would be concluded between Great Britain and India; fourthly, that a new Executive Council would be brought into being with the support of the main Indian parties to deal with the economic and social problems and work out the future position of India in the new world order.

Attlee made a broadcast on India from London on the same day, *viz.*, 19th September, and drew attention to the King's Speech which promised, "My Government will do their utmost to promote, in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion, early realization of full self-government in India."[4] He announced that the Government would act in accordance with the spirit and intention of the Cripps offer. Then he went on to repeat the announcement made by Wavell in India.

The All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay from September 21 to September 23. Vallabhbhai Patel moved the resolution on the Wavell proposals, as follows : "that the proposals now made are, in the opinion of the AICC, vague, inadequate and unsatisfactory", and "in order to demonstrate the will of the people, especially on the issue of the immediate transfer of power, the AICC resolves that the forthcoming elections be contested."[5]

An amendment was moved to the resolution "urging that the elected representatives of the Constituent Assembly of areas in which the Muslims were in a majority should be free to mould their own destiny and to make their own decision whether they should join the Indian Union or not", was opposed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Patel and lost.

To give effect to the second part of the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee and to make preparations for the coming elections the Congress Working Committee met early in December at Calcutta.

The Committee drew up the election manifesto which declared : The goal of India was a free democratic republic with fundamental

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[3] Menon, V. P., *The Transfer of Power in India* (1968 edition), p. 221.
[4] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1945, Vol. II, p. 149.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

rights and liberties of all citizens guaranteed. The republic would be a federation with autonomy for the constituent units, and legislatures elected under universal adult franchise. The federation would be a willing union of parts, in which the federal union government would be given a minimum of common and essential subjects, with a list of additional subjects which might be entrusted by the provinces.

Besides the structure of the independent state of India, the manifesto explained the objectives and functions of the state, and India's foreign policy.

But the dominant note of the manifesto was freedom for India, freedom won through confidence and strength.

The manifesto avoided all reference to communal controversies and laid stress upon equality, liberty and fundamental rights of all citizens, irrespective of differences of race, religion or culture.

The President and the Secretary of the Muslim League declared the proposals unacceptable as they did not concede the establishment of Pakistan prior to the consideration of the future constitution.

III. INA Trial

Both the Congress and the League welcomed the opportunity to prove their influence on their electorate and justify their claims. But before the voting started an event occurred which was not without significance for the elections. This was the trial of some INA officers who had fallen into the hands of the British when the Japanese were forced out of Burma. The charges against them were that "they had waged war against the King" and they were guilty "of gross brutality in the method employed to induce their fellow prisoners to join them."

A military tribunal was set up and the public trial was held inside the famous Red Fort at Delhi. The Congress decided to defend them and a number of eminent lawyers offered their services; among them were Bhulabhai Desai who actually acted as the chief defence advocate. Others included Tej Bahadur Sapru and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The trial created great excitement, for the name of Subhash Bose was associated with the INA and he had become the hero of India for his exploits in the cause of the nation. Demonstrations were held in many towns, funds were collected and the Congress leaders stumped the country with fiery speeches applauding Bose's army and its valorous deeds and denouncing the British not only for their continuous oppression in India, but also for rivetting the yoke of France and Holland over the south-eastern lands of Asia.

The feelings of the people were roused and they rallied round the Congress banner enthusiastically. Abul Kalam Azad has described

how the men of the army, the navy and the air force gathered round him wherever he went and assured him of their loyalty to the Congress. He explained the phenomenon by pointing out that in the Second World War the distinction between the martial and non-martial races had diminished and many Indian boys belonging to the educated classes, never enrolled before, entered the army. They were patriotic young-men who loved their country and longed for its independence.

IV. THE 1946 ELECTIONS

The Congress was thus riding on a wave of patriotic fervour. In order to abate the anti-British sentiment, the Secretary of State made another declaration in Parliament on December 4, 1945. He assured India that the Government was anxious to set up the constitution-making body without delay after the elections were over. He also announced that a delegation of members of Parliament would soon proceed to India on a goodwill mission.

The speech did not evoke adverse remarks in India, but the news of the Parliamentary Delegation's visit fell almost flat. The Muslim League also showed little interest.

The Congress Working Committee at its meeting in Calcutta on December 7, prepared the election manifesto, adopted a resolution which reaffirmed the policy of non-violence, and recommended the promotion of the constructive programme. The visit of the Delegation made no impact.

Meanwhile the elections to the Legislative Assembly were held. The position of the Congress in the country was so strong that its victory was certain. But the League was on its trial. While its popularity among the people was undoubted, the Muslim governments in the majority provinces could not be relied upon for whole-hearted support. For instance, in the Panjab Khizr Hayat Khan was not prepared to wind up the Unionist Party in favour of a purely Muslim League party. In Bengal, the two top-most leaders, Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy, were not on friendly terms.

In the North-West Frontier Province the ascendancy of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the Congress Party, was unchallenged.

But the League enjoyed the advantage of the sympathy and good-will of the British and Muslim officials. For instance, Khaliquzzaman admits that Abdur Rahman and Hasan Akhtar—two Provincial Service Officers, gave great help to the League in the Panjab.

Francis Mudie, the Governor, according to Khaliquzzaman, "had

been convinced of the Muslim cause. He was the only steady elemer in Sind...... He saved Sind for Pakistan at a very crucial time in the history of the League."[6]

Olaf Caroe, Governor of the NWF Province, was a sympathiser of the League.

In the elections the Congress secured 91.3 per cent of votes in the non-Muslim constituencies. It won 57 seats as against 44 which it held in the Assembly elected in 1934. The Muslim League annexed all the 30 seats of the Legislative Assembly reserved for the Muslims.

In the Provincial elections both the Congress and the League did extremely well as the table on the following page shows.

The Hindu Mahasabha was able to sneak through with two seats and the Independents including Europeans and non-League Muslims captured 201 seats; 16 nationalist Muslim representatives were returned.

In the elections of 1946 both parties vastly improved their record over the elections of 1937. The Congress obtained the majority of all elected seats in the Legislative Assembly, *viz.*, 57 out of 102. The League annexed cent per cent seats.

In the provinces in 1937 the Congress was able to gain 714 out of a total of 846 general seats; in 1946 it won 923 (including seats in the special constituencies). The Muslim League did still better. In 1937 its representatives numbered about 109 or 25 per cent of the Muslim quota of 492; in 1946 the percentage had gone up to 86 (425 seats).

The Congress had unmistakably refuted the wishful but totally erroneous assessment of Churchill, Amery and Company about the hold of the Congress on the people of India. Both the Government's propaganda against the organisation and its policy of ruthless repression had completely failed. Nay, they had helped to advance the Congress in the estimation and affection of the Indian people.

The Muslim League's achievement was remarkable. Jinnah stood fully vindicated as the outstanding leader of the organisation which had proved its claim to be the sole representative of the Muslim community. But the paradox whether the Muslims were a majority or a minority still remained unresolved. In fact they were both. From the point of view of undivided India and Muslims were a minority. From the point of view urged by Jinnah, they undoubtedly constituted a majority in the north-western and eastern regions, with a just claim to be recognised as self-governing units. In the rest of India they remained a religious minority, but an indivisible part of the Indian nation.

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[6] Khaliquzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

Province	Total seats	General seats	Muslim seats	Others	1937		1946	
					Seats won by Congress	Seats won by Muslim League	Seats won by Congress	Seats won by Muslim League
Assam	108	48	34	26	33	10	58	31
Bengal	250	80	119	51	54	40	86	113
Bihar	152	96	40	16	98	—	98	34
Bombay	175	120	30	25	86	18	125	30
C.P. & Berar	112	87	14	11	70	5	92	13
Madras	215	153	29	33	159	9	165	29
NWFP	50	9	36	5	19	—	30	17
Orissa	60	47	4	9	36	—	47	4
Panjab	175	43	86	46	18	1	51	73
Sind	60	19	34	7	7	—	18	27
U.P.	228	143	66	18	134	26	153	54
Total	1585	846	492	247	714	109	923	425

Source: For election figures for 1937 *Cmd. Paper 5589* and for election figures for 1946, *The Indian Annual Register* 1946, Vol. I, pp. 230-31.

The result of the election was damaging to the idea of India's unity. The rivalry between the Congress and the League which the elections of 1937 had created, was accentuated by the 1946 elections. In every legislature the two parties—the Congress and the League, stood face to face against each other. In the Muslim majority provinces the League members constituted nearly fifty per cent of the legislature. But in the non-Muslim provinces the Congress enjoyed absolute majorities. In the first, governments could only be formed with the cooperation of non-Leaguers. But in the latter the Congress did not depend on the support of other parties.

The consequence of such a situation was to increase the antagonism between the two. However, the cause of division was not so much communal as political.

V. Government's Proposals on the Constitutional Problem

The problem after the elections was to adjust the relation of the two parts of India, each enjoying full autonomy, and demanding independence.

On January 1, 1946, Pethick-Lawrence broadcast his personal message, conveying the desire of the British people and Government "to see India rise quickly to the full and free status of an equal partner in the British Commonwealth." He added, "the problem now is a practical one, it is to work out a rational and acceptable plan of action. It must be a plan under which authority can be transferred to Indian control under forms of government which will willingly be accepted by the broad mass of India's people so that new India will not be torn and rent by internal strife and dissensions."[7]

The elections had cleared the way for the subsequent steps towards the formulation of the new constitution. The Parliamentary goodwill delegation was in India when the elections were going on. They gauged something of the feeling in India about independence and were impressed by the unanimity of the demand, although there were profound differences among Indians concerning the form and structure of self-government.

On January 28, the Viceroy announced in the newly elected Legislative Assembly his intention to establish a new Executive Council consisting of political leaders and to set up a constitution-making body as soon as possible. While the Congress leaders received the announcement favourably, Jinnah repeated his stand-point that the League would not cooperate in any interim arrangement until the principle of Pakistan was immediately recognised.

On January 19, 1946, Pethick-Lawrence announced in Parliament

[7] Menon, V.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 228-29.

the steps which Government intended to take in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion for the early realisation of full self-government in India. These steps were :

(1) to hold preparatory discussions with elected representatives of British India and with Indian States in order to secure the widest measure of agreement as to the method of framing a constitution;
(2) to set up a constitution-making body; and
(3) to establish full self-government in India.

He also announced that a special Mission of Cabinet Ministers consisting of the Secretary of State, the President of the Board of Trade (Stafford Cripps) and the First Lord of Admiralty (A. V. Alexander) would go to India to act in association with the Vicerory in this matter.

In the debate on March 15, Prime Minister Attlee said : "His colleagues were going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavour to help her to attain freedom as speedily and as fully as possible." He concluded the speech in these words :

"We are very mindful of the rights of minorities and minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority."[8]

Attlee's speech was received by the Congress, on the whole, appreciatively. Gandhiji, Azad and Nehru expressed satisfaction with its content and tone. Pattabhi Sitaramayya contrasted Attlee's attitude as exhibited in the speech of March 15, 1946 with that of Churchill who announced the Cripps Mission on March 11, 1942, and hoped it would yield abiding results.

Jinnah, on the other hand, was critical. He remonstrated against the use of the term minority for the Muslim nation, complained about contradictory expressions, and reiterated his stand on Pakistan and division of India.

On March 23, the Cabinet Mission arrived in India. Pethick-Lawrence stated at a Press interview at Karachi on March 25, that the precise road towards the final structure of India's independence was not yet clear, but the Mission was determined to make a success of their efforts. He explained that their primary object was to set up machinery whereby full independent status of India would be determined by Indians, and secondly to make interim arrangements.

About the past proposals and pledges, Cripps remarked, "if we start going back to interpreting everything that has been said from Queen Victoria onwards we shall be in an awful muddle..... We want to start on a fresh basis."[9]

[8] Banérjee, A.C., *Indian Constitutional Documents, Vol.* IV, p. 208.
[9] Ashraf, M., *Cabinet Mission and After*, p. 18.

In order to further allay the apprehensions of the Muslim League, Pethick-Lawrence stated at the Press Conference at Delhi on March 25 : "while the Congress are representative of larger numbers it would not be right to regard the Muslim League as merely a minority political party—they are in fact majority representatives of the great Muslim community."[10]

The Mission spent nearly five weeks in discussion with the provincial Governors, the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, party leaders, representatives of minorities and special interests, premiers of the provinces and prominent individuals, as also with the representatives of the Indian States.

The Congress Reaction

The Congress point of view which was presented by Abul Kalam Azad, its President, ran along the well-known lines. Its primary basic demand was for independence to be embodied in a constitution comprehending the whole of India and made by a Constituent Assembly. But for the intervening period it was necessary to set up a provisional government which would be responsible for arranging the various stages from the formation of the constituent assembly onwards.

Its plan for the future consisted of a federal government with a limited number of subjects—compulsory and optional. The provincial governments would have all the other powers including the residuary powers. On the completion of the work of constitution-making they would have the right to choose one of the three alternatives: (1) to stand out of the constitution. (2) to enter the federation for the compulsory subjects, (3) to federate for compulsory as well as for the optional subjects.

On the composition of the provisional government the Congress was not aggreeable to parity of Hindu and Muslim members. For the election of the members of the Constitutent Assembly it suggested that the provincial legislatures should be taken as electoral colleges. So far as the States were concerned the peoples' representatives should not be left out. They could be chosen by Praja mandals.

In his interview Gandhiji drew the Mission's attention to the formula of Rajagopalachari which he recommended as the basis of negotiations, but he considered the two-nation theory a falsehood which he was not prepared to accept. In regard to the Interim Government his suggestion was that Jinnah should be asked to form the government of his own choice, but if he refused then the Congress should be given the chance.

Jinnah repeated before the Mission his theory that the Hindus and

[10] Menon, V.P., *op. cit.*, p. 238.

the Muslims could not be considered one nation. Only the British had imposed unity on India, but that unity was purely external, in reality India was many, not one. In his opinion after the withdrawal of the British there would be no power which could maintain this unity. It was therefore essential to divide India and transfer power to two sovereign and independent states.

The Secretary of State while agreeing with the League up to a point, expressed his concern about free India's position in the world situation and his anxiety concerning India's defence; for it had no air or naval force and its land army would not be able to stand against external aggression. In such a predicament India would have to turn to Britain for aid. But unless India could offer proper conditions in which aid could be useful, British cooperation might not be forthcoming. This was a broad indication of the desirability of a common defence.

The Sikh leaders were in favour of a united India. The two factions of the Scheduled Castes asked for guarantees of human rights and safeguards for their interests. On the question of India's partition they were opposed to the League demand. The Hindu Mahasabha insisted upon immediate transfer of power and the integrity and indivisibility of the country.

The Liberal leaders were against the division of India, but favoured parity of Congress and League members in the provisional government.

The Muslim League Reaction

The Muslim League, observing the hesitation of the Cabinet Mission concerning the future constitution of India, organised a Convention of the Muslim legislators—central and provincial, to impress upon the Mission their unanimity and determination on the demand for Pakistan. On April 7, 8 and 9 five hundred legislators attended the Convention at Delhi. It was an unprecedented demonstration in favour of their chosen goal. Jinnah, who presided, set the tone for the discussion by declaring : "there can be no compromise on the issue of Pakistan as a totally sovereign state. God is with us because our cause is righteous and our demand just. We will fight for it, and if necessary we will die for it; but take it we must—or we perish."[11] He warned the British Government if they are "going to sell the 100 million of Muslims and millions of other minorities for the sake of illusory hopes and promises of their having a flourishing trade, commerce and markets in India, it will be the greatest tragedy indeed in the history of Great Britain to go to that length and what is more it will never be realized."[12]

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[11] Ashraf, M., *op. cit.*, p. 19.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Firoz Khan Noon who held very responsible positions under the Government made a fire-eating speech which incited the worst passions of the Muslims; his words were :

"If the British force on us an Akhand (united) government, the destruction and havoc which Muslims will cause will put to shame the deeds of Halaku and Chengiz Khan."[13]

The Convention then passed the resolution demanding Pakistan and the delegates took a solemn pledge in the name of Allah affirming their willingness to undergo any danger, trial or sacrifice which might be demanded of them.

VI. Cabinet Mission's Scheme

Ever since the Conference at Simla (25th June to 14 July, 1945) it was evident that the British Government, in any case the Labour Party, had realized that self-government could no more be withheld. But the British rulers who were in favour of transfer of power were not sure regarding the party or parties to whom power should be entrusted—whether to agree with the Congress and retain the political unity of India even for limited common purposes, or accept the Muslim League's view, divide the country and establish two entirely independent and sovereign states. The reasons in favour of the Congress alternative were undoubtedly strong, almost irrefutable. But the Muslim League's objections based on fear, jealousy and hatred, were impervious to argument. In the conflict eventually emotion prevailed over reason.

The Cabinet mission and the Viceroy tried for some time to find a solution acceptable to both sides—without giving up the unity of India, and yet securing the essence of the Muslim League demand.

On April 16 the Mission again interviewed Jinnah and asked his preference for one of the two alternatives—a sovereign Pakistan with an area limited to districts containing a majority of Muslims, or a federation of autonomous provinces as part of the Union of India.

The next day the Mission met Azad and asked him to state his views on the structure of the federal centre. Azad replied that he could not give the Congress opinion without consulting the Working Committee. His personal opinion concerning the long-term plan was in favour of complete independence and a constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly; for the interim period he advocated a provisional government consisting of 15 ministers, 11 chosen by the provinces and four by the minorities. The subjects to be dealt with by the federal union would be of two kinds—compulsory and optional, and the

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

choice of the latter would depend upon the provinces which would be vested with residuary powers. But he could not agree to the division of India. His reaction to the suggestion of a sub-federation of provinces to administer subjects entrusted to it by a group of provinces was that the matter needed consideration.

On Pakistan he strongly urged the view that it was not only no solution of the communal problem, it was actually contrary to the interests of the Muslims of India. He pointed out, "two states confronting one another offer no solution of the problem of one another's minorities, but will only lead to retribution and reprisals by introducing a system of mutual hostages."[14]

When Azad reported his scheme to the Congress Working Committee on April 12, the first reaction was one of doubt. But "finally the Working Committee was convinced about the soundness of the proposal and Gandhiji expressed his complete agreement with the solution."[15]

Then a new scheme was placed before the Congress and the League leaders. In substance it provided a three-tier constitution—provinces, groups of provinces and Centre. In order to discuss this scheme a conference of the Congress and League representatives was invited to meet at Simla.

The Conference opened on 5th May 1946, to consider the question of (1) the grouping of provinces, (2) the character of the federal union and (3) the setting up of constitution-making machinery.

After some discussion during the first 3 days the Secretary of State sent on May 8 a paper to the leaders of the Congress and League groups for discussion in the Conference meeting of 9th May. The paper contained suggestions which might constitute the basis of agreement between the two parties. It contemplated the establishment of an All-India Federal Union dealing with three subjects, the vesting of all other subjects in the provinces, and the formation of sub-federations. It proposed that the Legislature and the Executive of the Union should be composed of equal number of representatives of the Hindu majority and Muslim majority provinces. It provided that a province could by the vote of the majority of its legislature call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after a period of ten years and subsequently at ten years' interval. It also suggested the composition, the members and the working of the constitution-making body.

The President of the Muslim League replied that the proposals in the paper were not acceptable, but the League delegates were willing to attend the Conference if so desired.

[14] Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 144.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his reply pointed out the objections to the proposals and suggested the immediate formation of an interim government responsible to the elected members of the Central Assembly. He also proposed the appointment of an umpire to settle the differences between the parties.

In the meeting of the Conference it was decided that Nehru and Jinnah should meet and try to arrive at a settlement. The meeting, however, proved fruitless. Then the League and Congress leaders submitted their memoranda to the Cabinet Mission containing their demands on May 12. They were so irreconcilable that it was futile to continue the discussions. So, on May 12, the conference was officially closed.

Four days later, on May 16, the Mission published a statement putting forward their recommendations whereby Indians might decide for themselves the future constitution of India, and meanwhile to set up an interim government to carry on the administration.

In the statement the first point considered was the demand for Pakistan. It was estimated in the western zone consisting of the four provinces of the Panjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan the total population of the Muslims was 22.65 millions and of non-Muslims 13.84 millions, that is 62 per cent of the population was Muslim and 38 per cent non-Muslim. In the eastern region the figures were 36.45 million Muslims and 34.06 non-Muslims, or 51.7 per cent Muslims and 48.3 per cent non-Muslims.

On the basis of these figures, the Mission's conclusion was that a separate sovereign state of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal minority problem; further, there was no justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Panjab and of Bengal and Assam in which the population was predominantly non-Muslim.

Having rejected the claim for the greater Pakistan of six provinces, the Mission considered whether a smaller Pakistan, shorn of the non-Muslim majority areas, was feasible. The objections to this plan were that it would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a large proportion of the inhabitants of those provinces, and that in the west, it would divide the Sikh community into two.

The second set of considerations which weighed with the Mission regarding Pakistan were administrative, economic and military. For instance, the communications system had been organised on an all India basis, its disintegration would gravely injure both parts of India. The problem of the division of the armed forces was even more vital. Wavell told Durga Das "the countries on India's periphery should have

a common system of defence. If India was partitioned, Pakistan would have no elbow-room to defend herself."[16]

The Mission pointed out that the two sections of Pakistan contained the two most vulnerable frontiers in India and for a successful defence in depth the area of Pakistan would be insufficient.

In the third place, partition would make the problem of the states more complex. Lastly, the geographical factor required consideration, for the two wings of Pakistan would be separated from one another by more than 700 miles of Indian territory making communications between them both in war and peace dependent on the goodwill of Hindustan.

The Mission, in view of these considerations, was "unable to advise the British Government that power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign states".[17]

The positive proposals of the Mission were:

(1) There should be a Union of India dealing with three subjects—Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications, having the powers necessary to raise the finances required for these subjects;

(2) The Union should have an Executive and a Legislature of representatives chosen from British India and the States; any question raising a major communal issue in the Legislature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all the members present and voting;

(3) All subjects other than the Union subjects and all residuary powers should vest in the provinces;

(4) The States should retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union;

(5) Provinces should be free to form groups (sub-federation) with Executives and Legislatures and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common.

(6) The constitution of the Union of the groups should provide for a reconsideration of the terms of the Constitution after an initial period of ten years, and at ten-yearly intervals thereafter.

With regard to the constitution-making body the mission proposed.

(1) the formation of an assembly on the basis of the recently-elected provincial legislative assemblies after correcting the defects in them by allotting to each province, a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to a million;

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[16] Durga Das, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

[17] Statement by Cabinet Delegation, May 16, 1946, in Gwyer, M., and Appadorai, A., *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution*, Vol. II, p. 579.

(2) the division of the provincial allocation of seats between the main communities in each province in proportion to their population;

(3) the provision of election of representatives of a community by its members in the provincial legislature.

This proposal contemplated a Constituent Assembly of 292 members from British India and 93 from the States. The British India members would be divided into 210 Hindus, 78 Muslims and 4 Sikhs.

(4) In the preliminary meeting the Assembly would decide the order of business, elect a chairman and other office-bearers, and an Advisory Committee to determine the rights of citizens, safeguards for minorities, and administration of tribal and excluded areas.

The Assembly would then divide itself into three sections consisting of groups of provinces, namely, A, B and C.

These sections would settle provincial constitutions of the provinces included in the section and also decide whether any group constitution should be set up. The provinces would have the right to opt out of a group after the first elections under the new constitution.

(5) Then the sections would meet together and with the States representatives proceed to prepare the Union Constitution. The Advisory Committee's recommendations would also be considered by the Union Constituent Assembly.

The Assembly would negotiate a treaty between the Union Assembly and the United Kingdom for matters arising out of the transfer of power.

The Mission's plan for the important problem of carrying on the country's administration while the constitution-making was proceeding was to set up an interim government having the support of the major political parties.[18]

These proposals were laid before Parliament by the Prime Minister on 16th May. The leader of the opposition Churchill was critical of them. He harped upon Britain's responsibility for the minorities—the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes, and its special relations with the Indian States. Although he admitted, "that we cannot enforce by British arms a British-made constitution upon Indians against the wishes of any of the main elements in Indian life",[19] he reserved the Party's freedom of action as to the future course it would take.

Pethick-Lawrence in a broadcast on 16th May explained how their scheme sought to reconcile the essential demands of both the Congress and the League—unity of India and Pakistan. Cripps in a press conference assured that the Mission had come out to India to transfer power to the people of India. Wavell asked the parties to

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Ashraf, M., *op. cit.*, p. 56.

give their consent to the scheme and quickly form a new government to face the challenges which confronted them. Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief, explained the Mission's proposals concerning the armed forces, *viz.* that the Indian War Member would be in charge of all political aspects of the defence department, and the Commander-in-Chief would be responsible for the command of the three forces—army, navy and air force.

Congress Response

The reaction of the Congress was voiced by Gandhiji and the Congress Working Committee. While Gandhiji welcomed the proposals, his interpretation was that the constituent assembly would be a sovereign body for drafting the constitution unhindered by any external authority, that it would be able to reject or improve the proposals of the Mission scheme, for instance, it could abolish the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim, or reject the idea of sub-federation; and that its decisions would take effect immediately.

The Working Committee drew attention to the departure of the scheme from the Congress demands, and laid stress upon the sovereign authority of the assembly; it was critical of the status and powers of the interim government, the participation of Europeans in the constituent body, the maintenance of British troops in India, and the representation of the peoples of the States in the Assembly. It rejected the idea of sub-federation.

Muslim League Response

The Muslim League was very much dissatisfied with the scheme. Jinnah sent a long statement embodying his criticisms to the Mission. He regretted that the demand for Pakistan was rejected; that the Muslims were divided into two zones—B and C; that one Constituent Assembly with an overwhelming Hindu majority was provided instead of two; that ignoring the League's insistence, one Union of India was prescribed with an executive and a legislature; that the demand for parity in the Central executive and legislature had not been mentioned; that the decision on communal issues was entrusted to the Chairman of the Assembly; and that the Assembly was given the power to determine the fundamental rights, the safeguards for minorities, and the administration of the tribal and excluded areas.

The Mission's Reply

The Mission in their reply of May 25, gave reasons for their proposals and met the objections and criticisms of the Congress and the

League. They gave the assurance that there would be no interference with the Assembly's discretion or questioning of its decisions. But after the Constitution was drafted, His Majesty's Government would recommend to Parliament such action as might be necessary for the transfer of sovereignty to the Indian people.

Concerning the option given to the provinces to opt out of the group it was intended that the right would be exercised by the people only after the Constitution was completed.

The Mission agreed that the interim government would be constituted on a new basis; all the portfolios would be held by Indians, the members would be chosen in consultation with the political parties, and the greatest possible freedom will be given to it in the exercise of day-to-day administration. Although the new government would function under the present Act there was nothing to prevent the members to resign individually or collectively if they lost the confidence of the legislature.

Azad asked the Viceroy to give a written confirmation that the interim government would be responsible to the Legislative Assembly. Wavell, on May 30, told Azad this was a matter of mutual trust, "we shall be able to cooperate in a manner which will give India a sense of freedom from external control."[20]

Wavell tried to induce both the Congress and the League to accept the 16th May proposals. It proved, however, even more hazardous than the trick of walking on a tight-rope. He had succeeded in abating the doubts of the Congress to some extent by his letter of May 30, when he was confronted with Jinnah's objections. So in a letter written on June 4, which was marked personal and confidential, he committed himself to the following promise :

"I can give you on behalf of the Cabinet delegation my personal assurance that we do not propose to make any discrimination in the treatment of either party and that we shall go ahead with the plan laid down in the statement so far as circumstances permit if either party accepts, but we hope that both will accept."[21]

The All-India Muslim League accepted the Mission's proposals on June 6, but raised numerous points on which it required explanation. It was willing to join the constitution-making body, but reserved its right to alter its attitude during the deliberations of the Assembly. In regard to the formation of the interim government it authorized Jinnah to negotiate with the Viceroy.

Jinnah reminded the Viceroy that in his talks he had stated that the government would be composed of 12 members—5 Congress, 5 Mus-

[20] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 276.
[21] Ashraf, M., *op. cit.*, p. 141.

lim League, one Sikh and one Indian Christian or Anglo-Indian, and that the important portfolios would be equally divided between the Congress and the League. But the Viceroy denied that he had given any assurance to that effect.

Both the Congress and the League seemed to be of two minds—reluctant to reject the 16th May plan outright, yet unwilling to accept it as it stood. The Sikhs were against the division of India and the plan of the grouping of provinces and a weak centre. The Scheduled Castes were divided into two factions. The Ambedkar faction opposed the framing of the constitution by a sovereign assembly, the other faction led by Jagjivan Ram and others, however, supported the Congress point of view.

VII. The Interim Government

From these discussions it appeared that although the views of the parties on the formation of the future constitution varied so greatly that no settlement could be expected immediately, it was perhaps possible for them to come together on the setting up of an interim government. The Viceroy, therefore, undertook to pursue the solution of the short-term issue.

Correspondence between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders, on the one hand, and Jinnah, on the other, began on June 12 on the filling of posts in the Interim Government. But as no agreement was arrived at between the parties on the issue, the Viceroy on June 16, announced his own proposal of an Executive Council consisting of 14 persons—6 belonging to the Congress, including a Scheduled Caste representative, 5 to the Muslim League, 1 Sikh, 1 Indian Christian, and 1 Parsee. He gave the names of the persons he had chosen.

Before defining his final attitude, Jinnah asked on June 19 for clarification of a number of points, the most important among them was the provision for decisions on communal issues in case the Muslim members were opposed. The Viceroy gave satisfactory answers on all the points including that of parity and repeated that no decision on a major communal issue could be taken in the Interim Government if the majority of either of the parties was opposed to it. Further he assured Jinnah that it would not be possible for him or the Cabinet Mission to accept a request for the exclusion of a Muslim who was not approved by the Muslim League. The replies once more placed Jinnah in a position from which he could bargain to the advantage of the League.

The contents of Wavell's letter in reply to Jinnah's letter of June 19 were communicated to the Congress President on June 21. On June 25, the Working Committee of the Congress met in Delhi and

declared its firm determination not to give up its right to nominate a Muslim nationalist to the Executive Council, nor to accept parity. Regarding decisions on communal issues the proposal of the League accepted by the Viceroy was regarded by the Committee as administratively unworkable. Because of these objections and in view of the replies of the Viceroy to Jinnah, the Committee rejected the Viceroy's proposals of June 16. But with regard to the statement of May 16, relating to the formation and functioning of the constitution-making body, while adhering to its reservations and interpretations, the Committee expressed acceptance of the proposals.

The Viceroy was glad to know that the Working Committee intended to enter the Constituent Assembly in a constructive spirit, but regretted its rejection of the proposals of June 16.

On 25th June the Viceroy informed Jinnah that the Congress had accepted the statement of May 16 while refusing to take part in the Interim Government proposed in the statement of June 16. As the result of the refusal, he could not give effect to the scheme of June 16, but would proceed with the formation of an interim government which would be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the statement of May 16.

Jinnah wrote to the Viceroy that the decision to suspend action on the statement of June 16 was contrary to the pledge given to him, *viz.*, in case one party refused to cooperate the Viceroy would proceed to form the Government with the help of the party willing to accept the June16 proposals. As the Congress had refused and the Muslim League accepted the statement it was a breach of the promise of June 4, and of the provision in para (8) of the statement of June 16.

Wavell, however, maintained that the statement of June 16 had failed to secure the necessary acceptance, and he was free to form a government as he chose. Consequently, he decided to nominate a Council composed of officials. At the same time he continued to make arrangements for the elections and summoning of the Constituent Assembly according to the plan of 16th May.

With the breakdown of the negotiations for agreement on the terms of the Interim Government, the prolonged efforts of the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy proved fruitless. But the failure was inherent in the situation and was not unexpected. Wavell anticipated it. He wrote to Mountbatten on 15th June :

"It looks as if, after many weeks of bargaining, the Congress were going to run true to form and turn down yet another offer. What will happen next is uncertain, but it will certainly be difficult and unpleasant."[22]

[22] Hodson, H. V., *The Great Divide*, p. 156.

Nor were the members of the Cabinet Mission very hopeful of the success of their endeavours. They were themselves divided in their views. While Cripps regarded the Congress point of view as representative of the opinion of the vast majority of Indians and therefore worthy of serious consideration, Wavell and Alexander supported the Muslim League's claims. Hodson notes :

"In his (Cripps) view the Mission must at all cost come to an accommodation with the Congress : they could manage without the League if they had the Congress with them, but not with the League alone without the Congress. Lord Wavell, and with less certainty Mr. Alexander, ranged themselves on the opposite side. While Sir Stafford felt he must resign if they broke with the Congress before making reasonable concessions, the Viceroy was not prepared to carry on if they gave way to Congress demands."[23]

VIII. Failure of Cabinet Mission

In the event they fell between two stools. They could neither satisfy the Congress nor the League. They felt frustrated and left India for England on June 29.

The fact is that for forty years the British rulers had been inciting the Muslims to counter the Congress in order to thwart the demand for self-government. The culmination of this course of policy was the Muslim League demand for Pakistan which received the blessings of Churchill, Amery, Linlithgow, as well as the sympathy of the Labour Party leaders—Attlee, Greenwood etc. The Second World War brought home to the British leaders the futility of the attempt to maintain the integrity of the Empire. But now although they were convinced that the transfer of power could not be withheld, they differed concerning the future of India—unity or division. This difference was reflected in the opinions of the Cabinet Mission ministers, and was responsible for its failure. Once again the British bureaucracy in India and its chief the Viceroy sticking to their notorious anti-Congress stance, prevented the solution of the deadlock, destroyed the chances of the realisation of a united and free India and helped to establish the entirely crazy and inherently unworkable state of Pakistan.

Unfortunately the mirage of Pakistan had so hypnotized the Muslims and their leaders that their faculties of critical examination were benumbed. It was impossible for them to give serious consideration to any alternative plan or to tolerate any deviation from their goal. If very reluctantly they did accept the May 16 or June 16 statements

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

of the Cabinet Mission, the reasons were that, in the first place, they could not afford to defy the wishes of their patrons and allies, the Government of India. Wavell for his own reasons wanted that some slender tie of unity of India—British India and the Indian States, should remain, because the defence of India from foreign aggression would become impossible if India was divided, and he expected that Independent India would, because of its military weakness, need the aid of the British.

Secondly, Jinnah was not certain of the solidarity of the Muslims, for even after the election successes of 1946, the situation was not free from anxiety in the Muslim majority provinces.

Therefore, when Wavell went back on the pledged words of his letter and statement, Jinnah heaved a sigh of relief and reverted to his claim for Pakistan. Both he and Wavell and their British supporters placed as usual the blame for their discomfiture on the shoulders of the Congress alone, especially of Gandhiji and Nehru.

IX. Congress and League Recriminations

The situation after the departure of the Cabinet Mission was that the Congress had rejected the 16th June proposals for Interim Government, but had accepted the plan of the Constituent Assembly—its election and functioning, with some reservations. The League had expressed its willingness to join the Assembly on June 6 and had given on June 25 its assent to the plan of the Interim Government contained in the statement of June 16.

But the Congress had agreed, subject to certain reservations and interpretations, to join the Assembly. The All-India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay on July 6 ratified the resolution of the Working Committee dated June 26. But Nehru the newly-elected President of the Congress in his concluding speech said that their acceptance of the Assembly plan only meant their agreement to enter the Constituent Assembly, and nothing more than that. He said, "we are not bound by a single thing except that we have decided for the moment to go to the Constituent Assembly."[24] In a statement to the Press he asserted that they were entirely and absolutely free to determine what they would do in the Assembly. He repudiated the suggestion of the Cabinet Mission regarding the arrangements for the minorities and the making of a treaty with the British Government, and totally discarded the idea of grouping of provinces.

His opinion concerning the proposed Union government was that,

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[24] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 283.

besides the three subjects mentioned in the statement of the Cabinet Mission, the subjects of military industries, foreign trade, currency and credit must be included in the Central list. It was also essential that the Centre should have the powers to raise funds by taxation, to settle inter-provincial disputes and to deal with administrative and economic breakdowns.

Nehru's indiscreet speech caused great consternation. Azad considered, "Jawaharlal's statement was wrong. It was not correct to say that Congress was free to modify the plan as it pleased. We had in fact agreed that the Central Government would be federal. There would be the compulsory list of three Central subjects while all other subjects remained in the provincial sphere. We had further agreed that there would be the three sections, *viz.*, A, B and C in which the provinces would be grouped. These matters could not be changed unilaterally by Congress without the consent of other parties to the agreement."[25]

Pethick-Lawrence in the House of Lords on 18th July warned the Congress, "having agreed to the statement of May 16 and the Constituent Assembly elected in accordance with that statement they cannot, of course, go outside the terms of what has been agreed."[26] Cripps on the same day made it clear in the House of Commons that it was obligatory on the part of the provinces to go into sections for the purpose of framing provincial and group constitutions, though they could after the constitution had been prepared, opt out of the groups.[27]

Jinnah made a long speech concerning the Congress Working Committee's resolution at the All-India Muslim League Council on July 27. He attacked the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy for playing into the hands of the Congress, treating the conditional acceptance of the Congress as genuine and postponing the formation of an Interim Government in accordance with the statement of June 16. He maintained that the Congress had unequivocally repudiated the essential provisions of the scheme of May 16, and rejected outright the proposals of June 16. On the other hand, the Muslim League accepted both these offers. Yet "a fantastic and dishonest construction was put on the clause (8 of June 16) by that ingenious juggler of words Cripps to evade the formation of the Interim Government."[28]

He laid "a grave charge against the honour, integrity and character of the members of the Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy,"[29] and

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25 Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 155.

26 House of Lords Debates, 1946; see *The Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 149.

27 H. C. Debates, 5th Series, Vol. 425, Col. 1402.

28 Ashraf, M., *op. cit.*, p. 299.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 297.

demanded a categorical reply from the Viceroy to his accusation. He affirmed that the Muslims could no longer depend upon the British rulers and were not prepared to remain under the slavery of the present rulers or the prospective government of the Congress.

The militant speech of Jinnah was followed by the resolution which after recounting the history of the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission stated : "In these circumstances the participation of the Muslims in the proposed constitution-making machinery is fraught with danger and the Council, therefore, hereby withdraws its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's proposal which was communicated to the Secretary of State for India by the President of the Muslim League on 6th June, 1946."[30]

In another resolution the Council recorded its conviction that the time had come for the Muslims to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan.

Jinnah explained the resolution by stating that the British had machine guns to enforce their will, the Congress had the weapon of civil resistance, therefore, the Muslims could not sit with their hands and feet tied, and must bid goodbye to constitutional methods and prepare for self-defence and self-preservation by direct action.

Liaqat Ali Khan declared that if the Congress formed a government at the Centre the Musalmans would resist it by all means and would make the functioning of such a government impossible.

The Working Committee of the League met on July 30 and fixed August 16 as the day for observing the 'Direct Action Day' throughout India.

The denunciation of the Congress inevitably roused the ire of Congressmen. Patel in a public speech on the Tilak anniversary day controverted the main points of Jinnah's statement, and asserted that the Congress and the League had diametrically opposite aims. He pointed out that Jinnah's charge against the Congress that it had not accepted the offer of the Cabinet Mission because the acceptance was accompanied with reservations, was equally applicable to the Muslim League's acceptance, for the League had declared that it would enter the Assembly in order to use it as a lever for the realization of a full-fledged Pakistan. He explained that the anger of Jinnah against the Cabinet Mission was due to the fact that the Mission had completely smashed the case for Pakistan, and left him no choice but to join the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly. Jinnah's subsequent revocation was due to the failure of his efforts to achieve parity with the Congress and to force the Congress to give up its national character.[31]

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

[31] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 216.

Behind this growing acerbity in the statements of the two parties there lurked the fears, and apprehensions of old, which the proximity of British withdrawal and the certainty of transfer of power to Indians augmented manyfold. The elimination of the third party, which it was expected would remove the cause of communal differences, actually accentuated them. The reason was that the religious and cultural aspect of the differences had receded into the background, but the political aspect had forged ahead into prominence. This fact was not clearly realized either by the Congress or the League. The Muslim League continued to speak of the Muslim nation and of one hundred million Muslims, thus claiming more than thirty million Muslims of Hindustan as citizens of Pakistan, thereby shaking their sense of duty and allegiance towards the country of their domicile and exposing them to the charge of disloyalty and treachery. Jinnah was never tired of branding the Muslims supporting the Congress as stooges, bootlickers and show-boys.

This attitude was extremely provocative, for it created an enormous problem for Hindustan, *viz.*, that of Indian national solidarity.

Again the demand for the partition of India ignored, as the Cabinet ministers had shown, the vital problem of India's defence against foreign aggression. Naturally the Congress looked at the proposal of Pakistan with much concern. Nor was it convinced that the heterogeneous peoples of the western region and even more the peoples of the western and eastern regions together could form a homogeneous nation or state.

Against the Congress opinion, however, was the fact of the Muslim League's electoral successes in the Muslim constituencies in the whole of India. This was a proof of the unity of the Muslims of India for the Pakistan demand. The growth of the popularity of the idea between 1937 and 1946 was indeed marvellous. That this popularity was a nine-days wonder and was inherently unstable could not be a valid argument in those hectic times. The Rajagopalachari formula, the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, the resolutions of the Working and All-India Congress Committees, all had conceded the right of self-determination of the Muslim majority areas in the western and eastern regions. Therefore the total opposition of the Congress to the grouping of provinces was illogical. It would have been right and proper to insist upon the exclusion of the Hindu majority areas from the provinces but the Congress was on weak ground when it opposed totally the formation of groups of provinces, minus the non-Muslim districts. There was little reason in denying the composition of a sub-federation of the Panjab, the North-West Frontier Provice, Sind and Baluchistan (Group B), or of a sub-federation of Eastern Bengal and Sylhet (Group C), or in disputing the right of these regions to self-determination.

A less rigid attitude on both sides might have saved the unity of India, and prevented the never-ending holocaust which started with the Calcutta riots in the middle of August.

The claim that the Muslims of India were one nation because they differed in religious beliefs from the Hindus and that, therefore, the Muslims and Hindus could not unite together in a common socio-political order was quite invalid both in theory and practice.

In order to make it plausible Jinnah and his followers bolstered it with fantastic and exaggerated comparisons between the worst features in the practices of the Hindus and the highest ideals in the teachings of Islam which were never observed in actual practice by any Muslim country including India. Comparisons of this kind are the common fare of religious polemics, but to use them in serious political discussion was pampering ignorance and superstition.

Jinnah's methods of controversy were unfortunate. He assumed for himself all the virtues—honesty, truth, and straightforward dealings, and accused the leaders of the Congress with the worst motives, evil intentions and crooked ways. His vanity was colossal so that dialogue with him was never easy or pleasant. He always harped on vague generalities but never descended to definite objective realities.

In such circumstances it was easy to multiply misunderstandings and almost impossible to arrive at compromise and settlement.

X. Nehru Accepts Viceroy's Invitation

By the end of July the elections to the Constituent Assembly were over. The results were as expected. Of the total of 296 members allotted to British India, four seats remained vacant because the Sikhs refused to join the Assembly. The 292 seats were divided into the three sections A, B and C. In Section A (group of provinces of Madras, Bombay, Orissa, U.P., C.P. and Bihar) the Congress won 162 general and 2 Muslim seats, the Muslim League 19 seats, and the Independents 1. In Section B (Panjab, NWF Province, Sind and Baluchistan) the Congress annexed 7 general and 2 Muslim seats, the Muslim League 19, the Unionist Party 3, the Independents 1. In Section C (Bengal and Assam) the Congress obtained 32, the Muslim League 35, the Communists 1, the Scheduled Castes Federation 1, and the Krishak Praja Party 1. The total number of the Congress members was 201 and of the Muslim League 73, of the Independents 8 and of other parties 6. The Congress won all the general seats except 9, the League all the Muslim seats except 5.

While the elections were proceeding the Viceroy formed a new care-taker government, which was sworn in on July 4. But in view

of the worsening situation he realised the immediate need of installing a popular government consisting of leaders of the political parties. He wrote letters to Nehru and Jinnah explaining his plan for the new government. He proposed to form a government consisting of 14 members—six members (including one Scheduled Caste representative) to be nominated by the Congress; five members to be nominated by the Muslim League; three representatives of the minorities nominated by the Viceroy. The portfolios would be equitably distributed after the finalization of nominations. The status and powers of the Interim Government would be in accord with the Viceroy's letter of May 30 to Azad. Regarding the deciding of controversial communal issues it was not necessary to make a formal regulation, for the matter ought to be left to convention.

Nehru replied on July 23 stressing the need for giving independence of action to the government by treating the Viceroy as a constitutional head. Wavell considered the reply unacceptable, but referred to the Secretary of State for advice. The Secretary of State asked the Viceroy to meet Nehru personally and have a personal discussion. In case the matter was not settled in mutual talks, he proposed that the Congress and League leaders should come to England to meet the Secretary of State, which would require the presence of the Viceroy also in London.

Nehru could see the Viceroy only after the meeting of the Working Committee on August 8. Meanwhile on July 27 the Muslim League had reversed its previous (June) decision accepting the May 16 offer. Then on July 31, Jinnah replied to Wavell's invitation of July 22 to join the Interim Government, declining the invitation.

Both the Secretary of State and the Viceroy then deemed it expedient to invite the Congress to constitute the Interim Government, leaving the decision on the inclusion of the Muslim League representatives to future developments. On 6th August the Viceroy asked Nehru to make proposals for the formation of Interim Government, after ascertaining, if he liked, the intentions of Jinnah regarding the formation of a coalition government.

From August 8 to 10, the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution which while not approving all the details of the statement of the Cabinet Mission dated May 16, accepted the scheme in its entirety, and proposed to proceed with the work of the Constituent Assembly. The Committee emphasized the sovereign character of the Constituent Assembly, namely, the right to draw up the constitution of India without external interference, but subject to the internal limitations consistent with the largest measure of cooperation and the greatest measure of freedom and protection for all just claims and interests. The Committee regretted that the Council of the Muslim League had

reversed their previous decision to participate in the Constituent Assembly.

The Committee appealed to the Muslim League for cooperation, and tried to remove the misunderstandings created by Nehru's statement.

Jinnah's comment on August 12 on the Working Committee's resolution of August 10, was that it did not change the situation and therefore he was not prepared to revise the Council resolution of July 29.

Nehru accepted the Viceroy's invitation of the 6th August and on 13th August wrote to Jinnah, inviting his cooperation in the task of forming the Interim Government. The two leaders met at Bombay on August 15; Nehru at a press conference on the 16th announced that Jinnah had declined to extend his party's cooperation to the Congress in the formation of the Provisional National Government. He declared that while the door of cooperation was still open, the Congress would go ahead with the formation of the Provisional Government.

Jinnah in his rejoinder expressed his disagreement with the views of Nehru about the status and powers of the Constituent Assembly, the composition and authority of the Provisional Government, the transfer of responsibility of the government from the Governor-General to the Central Legislative Assembly, and declared that the Muslim League could not cooperate with the Congress on Nehru's terms.

XI. League's Direct Action

Meanwhile on 14th August Jinnah issued a statement to explain the purpose of the Direct Action Day celebrations. He stated that "the object and purpose of this is to make the Muslims understand fully the situation that is facing Muslim India and that they should prepare themselves for any eventuality that we may have to face."[32]

The gloss of Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, President of the All-India Jamiatul Ulama-i-Islam, was:

"The Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission most shabbily going back on their words and the vanity and arrogance of the Congress, have forced the one hundred million followers of Islam to disregard all sorts of trouble and come out courageously in the field of action, in order that the world may know that the Muslim nation can still give the highest sacrifices for the attainment of its great aim and by its activities may teach a lesson to the aggressive opposition and to the men who dishonoured their own pledges."[33]

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[32] Ashraf, M.; *op. cit.*, p. 373.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 375

The 16th of August 'the Direct Action Day' declared by the Muslim League as the day of protests and meetings to propagate the Muslim demand, to explain the Muslim attitude towards the Cabinet Mission's offer and to condemn the conduct of the Congress, arrived. In the situation when tension had been building up, hopes and fears had been rapidy alternating, communal relations had been worsening, the decision of the Viceroy to invite the Congress to form the Provisional Government proved the proverbial last straw.

To the Muslims it appeared as if the Government had suddenly broken with the past, let down the Muslims who had trusted the British throughout the years of civil disobedience and war; and deliberately disregarded the assurances that no constitutional advance or important political change would be effected without the previous consent of the Muslim League and its President. Their reaction was swift and violent.

Jinnah was highly incensed and refused the offer of Nehru to participate in the government on his invitation, that is, under the patronage of the Congress. The theologian Usmani asserted "no power on earth can crush the Muslim. Living he is a *Ghazi* (warrior) and killed in action he is a martyr."[34]

In Calcutta the day began with public demonstrations, closing of shops (*hartal*) and hoisting of Muslim League flags. Soon resistance led to clashes and rioting spread over the city. Confusion and disturbance gripped the people and the hooligans obtained the opportunity to carry on their nefarious activities—stabbing, killing, arson, criminal assaults on women; then vengeance and vendetta on a large scale fastened their pitiless regime upon Calcutta. The mad fury continued for four days and then on August 20 the city began to return to normal life. During the days of mass killings and wholesale outrage the forces of law and order proved utterly ineffective to meet the emergency. The police was supine or indifferent and many believed that it was partial. The Government of Suhrawardy showed its lack of foresight by declaring a public holiday on the 16th and thereby making it possible for students, office staff and others to join the crowds and roam about the streets. The army though standing by was not called till the situation went out of hand. The Government was rightly charged with failure to take precautionary measures to avert conflicts, to protect life and property of the citizens and to maintain law and order.

The casualties could not be estimated accurately. Hodson gives the figure of 5,000 killed and 15,000 seriously injured in Calcutta. How many of them were Hindus and how many Muslims is anybody's

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 369.

guess. Besides, the number of houses destroyed and loss of property was never revealed.

Mutual recriminations inevitably followed. Each side blamed the other. The leader of the Congress Party in the Bengal Assembly moved a no-confidence motion against the Suhrawardy Ministry, charging the Muslim League with a deliberate and prepared onslaught on the Hindus and the Government for encouragement of League action. Suhrawardy denied the charges, and put the blame on the Congress for attempting to thwart the demonstration of the League in order to prevent the Government from modifying the offer made to Nehru. He held the Congress responsible for the panic which led to the catastrophe. The motion was defeated—all the European members voting against it.

Jinnah went a step further and accused the Congress for deliberately provoking the riots and committing violence. Liaqat Ali Khan affirmed that the Hindus plunged Calcutta into the orgies of violence and slaughter for two reasons—first to discredit the Muslim League Ministry, second to demonstrate that India had already passed under the rule of the Hindus as a result of Wavell's offer to Nehru.

XII. The Interim Government Formed

On Wavell, who visited Calcutta later, the tragedy produced a profound impression—it was not so much the actual loss of life and property which mattered, but the spirit of mutual rivalry and challenge which threatened to plunge the country into civil war and bloodshed, which was frightening. According to him there were only two ways of dealing with the situation, either by military action for which the British troops would have to be transported from England, or entrusting governmental authority to Indians by persuading Congress and Muslim League to form a coalition ministry at the Centre.

The first alternative was impracticable for many reasons, hence there was no escape from the second. But the transfer of power was like piloting a ship through the Scylla and Charybdis of the Congress and the League.

He tried to persuade Nehru that in choosing members for the Provisional Government he should keep in reserve the quota of 5 Muslim Leaguers and invite them to accept. When he met Nehru and discussed the formation of the government, he urged upon him the necessity of meeting Jinnah and asking him to cooperate.

But Nehru's approach to Jinnah was unfruitful, for Jinnah refused to enter the government. His objections were:

(i) that in the Interim Government the Viceroy's veto would not be exercised;

(ii) that the government would be responsible to the legislature and not the Viceroy;

(iii) that a nationalist Muslim would be included in the government.

Nehru's next step was to write on August 22, a letter to the Viceroy stating that although he was anxious to form a coalition with the Muslim League, he wanted to make it clear that coalition did not mean a submission to the demands or the peculiar ways which the League had adopted. He wanted a strong government united in the pursuit of policies on which there was fundamental agreement.

On 24th the new Government was announced. It consisted of the following members:

1. Jawaharlal Nehru
2. Vallabhbhai Patel
3. Rajendra Prasad
4. Asaf Ali
5. C. Rajagopalachari
6. Sarat Chandra Bose
7. John Mathai
8. Baldev Singh
9. Shafaat Ahmad Khan
10. Jagjivan Ram
11. Ali Zaheer
12. C. H. Bhaba

Two more Muslim members remained to be appointed. The 2nd of September was fixed for the assumption of office.

The Viceroy in his broadcast the same night promised to give the new Government the maximum freedom in the day-to-day administration of the country. He regretted that though 5 seats had been offered to the Muslim League, though assurances had been given that the scheme of constitution-making would be worked in accordance with the procedure laid down and the new Interim Government would operate under the existing constitution, the League had not found it possible to form a coalition. But he added, the offer to take five Muslim Leaguers in the government was still open.

In his reply to the Viceroy's broadcast Jinnah accused the Viceroy of making a misleading statement and repeated the charge of breach of promise.

On assuming office on September 2, Nehru appealed for the cooperation of every Indian in the country. Again broadcasting on September 7, he declared, "We are perfectly prepared to, and have accepted, the position of sitting in sections which will consider the

question of formation of groups. . . . We seek agreed and integrated solutions with the largest measure of goodwill behind them."[35]

League Enters Interim Government

The Muslim League declared the 2nd of September as a day of mourning and Jinnah instructed the Muslims to display black flags. Gandhiji said, "we are not yet in the midst of civil war, but we are nearing it." Violence was breaking out in Bombay, Panjab, Bengal and Bihar. Jinnah's response to Nehru's broadcast of 7th September was a bitter attack on the Congress and the British Cabinet.

The face of the situation was assuming every day a more ugly form. Gandhiji was anxious to pacify Jinnah. He therefore accepted the formula which Nawab of Bhopal presented to him for improving communal relations. The formula required the Congress to recognise the Muslim League as the authoritative representative of an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of India, without giving up its right to choose any representative it thought proper for the Interim Government or the Constituent Assembly.

On this basis Jinnah agreed to discuss the composition of the Interim Government and cooperation of the Muslim League with the Congress. Nehru met him on 5th October and then correspondence ensued between them. Ultimately on October 8 Jinnah expressed his willingness to settle with the Congress on the basis of 9 points which he communicated to Nehru. Nehru and his colleagues, however, were unable to give assent to some of these points, the negotiations ended, and the deadlock continued.

Meanwhile Wavell was engaged in an attempt to bring round Jinnah, for he felt that the Muslim League should be brought into the government without any delay. According to him the government by one party was both unfair and fraught with dangers. He disagreed with the Secretary of State whose advice was to allow the Congress to continue in office and realize the need of adjustment with the League. Wavell, on the contrary, strongly held the view that the promise to the League of freedom to the provinces and groups for adopting their constitution by a majority vote, ought to be implemented. "He would rather lose the cooperation of the Congress at the Centre and in the provinces than go ahead with constitution-making on a one-party basis."[36]

For Jinnah here was a welcome opportunity to rebuff the Congress and foreclose with the Government. Jinnah in his interview with the Viceroy on September 15 had urged his objections to joining the

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 406.

[36] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 311.

Constituent Assembly. Concerning the Interim Government he insisted on a convention to safeguard the major communal issues, and the Vice-Presidentship of the Council which he suggested should be held in rotation.

Jinnah then communicated to the Viceroy nine points on which elucidation was wanted. The Viceroy did not agree on the exclusion of a Muslim not approved by the League, and explained why a convention on communal issues was unworkable. He promised to appoint a Leaguer as Chairman of the Coordination Committee of the Cabinet. instead of an alternate Vice-President. He asked for the acceptance of May 16 statement.

More meetings and exchange of letters followed. At last on October 13, Jinnah informed Wavell, "my Committee have for various reasons come to the conclusion that in the interests of Musalmans and other communities it will be fatal to leave the entire field of administration of the Central Government in the hands of the Congress. . . . We have decided to nominate five (Muslims) on behalf of the Muslim League in terms of your broadcast dated August 24, 1946, and your two letters to me dated October 4 and 12 embodying clarifications and assurances."[37]

The names were:

1. Liaqat Ali Khan
2. I. I. Chundrigar
3. Abdur Rab Nishtar
4. Ghazanfar Ali Khan
5. Jogendra Nath Mandal.

While Jinnah accepted Wavell's offer and sent in the list of his five nominees, he kept silent on the Viceroy's condition about the withdrawal of the resolution of the Muslim League Council rejecting the Cabinet Mission statement of May 16, Wavell was so anxious to bring the League into the government that he did not insist upon the fulfilment of the condition.

Thus the Muslim Leaguers entered the government without commitment to join the Constituent Assembly.

In a letter to the Viceroy dated October 23, Nehru reminded Wavell that the Muslim League representatives were accepted for the Interim Government on condition that the Muslim League would cancel the resolution of 29th July and agree with the statement of May 16. He therefore asked him to clear up whether the League's willingness to join meant working as a team or not and secondly whether the League accepted the May 16 statement or not.

The Viceroy replied that Jinnah had assured him that the League

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[37] Ashraf, M., *op. cit.*, pp. 426-27.

intended to cooperate in the government and the Constituent Assembly and that he must call the League Council at an early date to rescind its resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission offer of May 16.

Jawaharlal made room for the Muslim Leaguers in his Cabinet. He dropped three of his nationalist colleagues, namely, Sarat Chandra Bose, Shafaat Ahmad Khan and Ali Zaheer, in addition to the two vacancies already available.

The whole of the correspondence and the interchange of views at the personal level, make it quite clear that all the three parties—the Congress, the Muslim League, and the Government of India, were living during those days in a world of make-believe and fantasy. The aims and objects of each one of them were quite different from those of the others. The Congress which wanted a united government exercising joint responsibility and pursuing common goals deluded itself in believing that the Muslim League by entering the Interim Government would somehow be induced to cooperate in the tasks lying ahead. The Muslim League, on the other hand, declared from the mouth of Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "we are going into the Interim Government to get a foothold to fight for our cherished goal of Pakistan."

Liaqat Ali Khan was less strident but equally frank. He stated at a press conference, "the future of India could only be secured if there was complete freedom for the two major nations, the Hindus and Muslims. . . . This Government has been formed under the present constitution and as such there is no such thing as joint or collective responsibility."[38] He refused to accept the leadership of Nehru.

Jinnah endorsed the views of his two colleagues. He declared: "The Interim Government should not be allowed to do anything administratively or by convention which would in any way prejudice or militate against the problem of the future constitution of India and we shall certainly resist any attempt which directly or indirectly prejudices or militates against our demand of Pakistan."[39]

Wavell perhaps hugged to his bosom the vain hope that the two parties might come round to the realization that the British presence was necessary in India and hence accept guidance, if not actual direction, in the administration of the three central subjects.

XIII. Communal War

The coalition cabinet was launched on October 25 on the stormy seas of mutual distrust and contrary aims. But the discord within the

[38] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 271.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 275.

government was merely a sign of the turmoil raging in the country. The Calcutta fires were hardly extinguished when serious riots broke out in Noakhali and Tipperah districts on October 15. Plunder, destruction of properties, murder and dishonouring of women were perpetrated on a large sacle. Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam. The hostilities continued for many days, the Government and its agencies—police and army, again rendered little help, or gave protection to the victims, and for the time the hooligans ruled and trampled law and order under their feet. No accurate estimate of the losses could be made, but according to unofficial accounts five thousand lost their lives, and the devastation of property was enormous. The conversion of Hindus in large numbers and vile offences against women were perhaps the ugliest features of the East Bengal riots.[40]

The East Bengal carnage augmented the tension which already existed in Bihar. According to Nehru, "The events in Calcutta from 16th August onwards resulted in the killing of a large number of Biharis. Refugees started pouring in Bihar carrying with them stories of the tragic events in Calcutta to the countryside. News from Noakhali and East Bengal, especially the accounts of forcible conversion of large numbers and abduction and rape of Hindu women greatly inflamed the people. A feeling grew that nobody was helping the hapless Hindus of East Bengal. Trouble broke out in Chapra on 26th October. It spread into Patna district and overflowed into Gaya and Monghyr districts. It was a mass uprising; peasants in large numbers attacked Muslim houses, burnt them down and looted their property". On 3rd November Nehru and other central ministers arrived in Patna and addressed large meetings to stop rioting. Curfew was declared in certain areas, the army started patrolling and firing on defiant crowds. Large number of refugees were brought to relief camps and the situation was brought under control.[41]

The reports from East Bengal and Bihar caused great anguish to Gandhiji. He appealed to the people of Bihar to repent of their inhumanity and assure the Muslims that they were their own brothers and sisters. He undertook a penance for the tragedy in the province.

Another case of outbreak of violence occurred in Garhmukteswar, a pilgrim centre, on the bank of the river Ganga. On the 8th November during a fair a petty quarrel led to a fracas in which a number of Muslims were killed.

Gandhiji had resolved to visit East Bengal before the Bihar riots had started and he had left Calcutta on his way to Noakhali. From East Bengal there had come to him an inner call to render help to the

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[41] Ghosh, Sudhir, *Gandhi's Emissary*, pp 32-43.

distressed and frightened Hindus. About the same time he was asked to visit Bihar to bring solace to the Muslims who had suffered terrible hardships. The choice was difficult, but having arrived in Noakhali and having made arrangements for visiting East Bengal villages, he decided not to change his plan, but to go to Bihar after his work in East Bengal was over.

What he achieved in this land, endowed with all the gifts of nature and ordained for peace and plenty, for the relief of men and women sorrow-stricken by cruelties through his abounding love and deep compassion which embraced both the wronged and the wrongdoer, the victim and the victimiser, is unparalleled in the annals of the golden deeds of man.

These terrible happenings increased the bitterness between the Congress and the League. The Congress provincial leaders accused the League of deliberately provoking lawlessness and of organising attacks with the connivance of officials. On the other side, the Muslim League leaders placed the responsibility for the riots on the Hindus. The effect of the rising tide of antagonism was twofold. The working of the government became more and more difficult as days passed. The Congress members were incensed by the obstructive tactics of the League members. As Lumby puts it, "the League bloc had entered the Government with the avowed object of holding Congress in check, lest anything should be done which might prejudice the settlement of the long-term issue. In this campaign one of their chief weapons was the emphasis on legality—which might even drive them to invoke the Viceroy's special powers in order to save themselves from being overridden by the Congress majority."[42]

"Nehru accused the Leaguers of taking help from the British Government and opposing the national struggle, and the British of trying to make the League into the 'King's party'."[43]

XIV. League's Intransigence over Constituent Assembly

Wavell having secured the entry of the Muslim League into the Government, set about to bring them both into the Constituent Assembly. He wrote to Jinnah on November 5 and asked him to get the resolution of the League Council passed on July 29 rescinded. Jinnah had promised to get it done, according to Wavell,[44] but he evaded its fulfilment. Instead, on November 17 he wrote to Wavell

[42] Lumby, E.W.R., *The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 123.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1946, Vol. II, p .281.

alleging that the Congress had not accepted the statement of May 16, and requesting for a postponement of the Assembly *sine die*.

Another difficulty then arose. Bardoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam, raised objections to the compulsory assignment of Assam to Section C. Gandhiji supported Assam's plea, and Nehru was in favour of giving liberty to the province whether to join a group or not.

Wavell issued invitations for the meeting of the Constituent Assembly on November 20. The very next day Jinnah expressed his regret on the decision to summon the Assembly on December 9, and described it as "one more blunder of very grave and serious character." He declared that no representative of the Muslim League would participate in the Constituent Assembly.

Nehru's reply was that the Assembly would meet whether the Muslim League came in or not. He opposed the demand for postponement.

Wavell then told Liaqat Ali Khan that he could not agree to the representatives of the League remaining in the Interim Government unless the League accepted the long-term plan. Liaqat Ali Khan would not accept the long-term plan except on his own terms, and was ready to resign from government.

A critical situation had thus arisen. In order to resolve the crisis the Secretary of State invited the leaders of the Congress, the League and the Sikhs to London to discuss with His Majesty's Government the manner of dealing with the problem of the Constituent Assembly.

Before they proceeded to England the annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Meerut on November 23 and 24. Nehru charged the Viceroy with failure to carry on the government in the spirit in which he had started, and complained that there was an alliance between the League and British officials. He divulged that the strain in the government had reached a breaking point, and if it continued a struggle on a large scale was inevitable. The Congress leaders demanded that the League should either accept the Cabinet Mission plan and come into the Constituent Assembly, or quit the Interim Government.

Jinnah reaffirmed in a press conference on 25th November his resolve not to join the Assembly. He rejected the view that the Interim Government should act as a team, and refused to recognise Nehru as the head of the government. He proclaimed that the League members would resist every step and every measure which obstructed the settlement of the future constitution, and would not act according to the orders of the Congress as a subservient group.

The invitation of the Secretary of State was reluctantly accepted by Nehru in response to a personal appeal by Attlee. On December 1, Wavell accompanied by Nehru, Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan and Baldev

Singh, left Karachi for London. The four-day (December 3rd to 6th) discussions failed to bring about a settlement. According to the statement issued on December 6 after the breakdown the main hurdle was the proposal in the May 16 statement according to which the groups of provinces would settle the provincial and group constitution, but the provinces would have the option to secede after the new constitution had begun to operate, and the new provincial legislatures had by a majority of votes decided to go out of the group.

The interpretation of His Majesty's Government was that the formation of the Sections was a pre-condition for the convening of the Assembly for the purpose of preparing provincial and group constitutions, and that the disputed matters in the Sections would be decided by a simple majority of votes of the representatives in the Sections.

The Congress had agreed to the formation of the three groups, but differed from the interpretation of the British Cabinet and the Muslim League. It held that every province, as an autonomous unit, had the right to decide independently, and irrespective of the majority of the Section, both as regards the terms of its own constitution and whether or not it should join a group initially.

The most significant part of the statement was: "Should the constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling part of the country."

The decision to observe Gandhian non-violence and to abstain from the use of force to effect a communal settlement was an amazingly gratuitious encouragement to intransigence. There are only two methods of resolving political deadlocks—one is negotiation and persuasion by peaceful means, failing which the hard experience of human history indicates the other alternative, *viz.*, resort to force.

If the party to a quarrel knows that the failure of the peaceful method will not lead to any untoward result, it is left free to continue its quarrel undeterred by the fear of consequences. The threat of war does induce a sense of caution and responsibility even when it is unable to prevent war.

The British rulers' attitude was that the use of force was legitimate when the Congress was making what in its opinion were unreasonable demands, for example, in the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movement of 1920 to 1922, or in the Salt Satyagraha campaign of 1930-32, or in the Quit India demand of 1942; but however obviously unreasonable the Muslims' conditions might be, force should not be employed. This was the course followed throughout the first half of the twentieth century, whether the demand was for separate communal electorate,

or excessive representation or creation of new provinces, or laying down proportions for the filling of public services, or provincial autonomy, or ultimately for the division of the country.

Unfortunately so long as the third party dominated and retained in its hands the apparatus of force, this force was used to prevent the differences of the communities being settled either by peaceful or by violent method.

In essence the difficulty was due to the fundamental problem of unity versus partition. The Muslim League point of view that partition must come first was upheld by His Majesty's Government, but was not acceptable to the Congress. Neither party was prepared to compromise on the issue and the gulf between them could not be bridged.

Nehru and Baldev Singh returned to India, but Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan stayed back to carry on propaganda in favour of Pakistan. As announced by the Viceroy, the Constituent Assembly opened on December 9 in the library of the Council Chamber. Two hundred and five members attended, and were seated in separate blocs province-wise. The seventy-three Muslim League representatives abstained from attendance. There were no representatives of the Indian States.

The preliminary business of the Assembly was to appoint a Rules Committee and to elect a Chairman. A committee of 15 was selected to frame the rules of procedure for the Assembly, the Sections and the Committees. Rajendra Prasad was elected as the Chairman of the Assembly.

The Constituent Assembly thus started upon its momentous and tremendous task of evolving a constitution which would regulate the affairs of hundreds of millions of human beings for generations to come.

The absence of the League representatives was deplored by a number of prominent members of the Assembly. But the Congress Working Committee which met on 22nd December criticized the Government's statement of 6th December and the speeches in Parliament made by Pethick-Lawrence and Stafford Cripps on belhaf of Government on 11th and 12th of December. It repeated its objections to the grouping clauses of the Cabinet Mission's statement. Thus it created the impression of its continued opposition to the entry of the Muslim League in the Assembly.

The All-India Congress Committee, however, modified the resolution of the Working Committee, and at the instance of Nehru, adopted on January 5, 1947, the following resolution:

"The AICC agree to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government in regard to the procedure to be followed in the Sections. It must be clearly understood, however, that this must not involve any compulsion of a Province, and that the rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab should not be jeopardised. In the

event of any attempt at such compulsion, the Province or a part of a Province has the right to take such action as may be deemed necessary in order to give effect to the wishes of the people concerned."[45]

In this Resolution the Congress had made another concession expecting the League to reciprocate by allaying the fears and apprehensions of the Sikhs and the people of Assam. But Jinnah was unrelenting. He spoke no soothing word to the minorities in Sections B and C.

The door of cooperation seemed firmly closed. On February 5, the nine non-Muslim League members of the Government demanded the resignation of the League members. Wavell conveyed this demand to Liaqat Ali Khan who contended that not only the Muslim League but the Congress too had in fact not accepted the plan of the Cabinet Mission, nor had the Sikhs, and therefore they had no greater right than the Muslim League to remain in the Interim Government. The Viceroy was placed on the horns of dilemma. He sympathised with the League contention, but the Congress stand that a province could not be compelled could not be gainsaid.

While the Viceroy was consulting the Secretary of State regarding the line of action, Nehru demanded on February 13 the resignation of the Muslim League members, and two days later Patel announced that the Congress members would resign if the League members remained.

In the opinion of the British Government either eventuality—resignation of the Congress members or the withdrawal of the League members from the Interim Government spelt disaster.

Omens of impending calamity were already visible. The chain of the bloody feud which had started on August 16 at Calcutta was lengthening. East Bengal in October, Bihar in November and the state of general disquiet, uncertainty and unrest throughout the country were alarming enough. The nervous tension was intensified by the conflict within the government. The government services were affected with partisan spirit. It was apprehended that the army might become involved, and if that happened, law and order would break down and chaos might ensue.

XV. Britain Decides to Quit

Having brought India to the brink of the precipice by the mischievous policies pursued undeviatingly over many decades, indeed ever since the British interference in Indian politics in the eighteenth century, the consequences of the Second World War, true to the pattern

[45] Menon, V.P., *op. cit.*, p. 337.

of British behaviour after the war, roused England to a sense of realities.

The realism implied the recognition that a war-weary, economically broken and socially disrupted England had no justification for imperialist adventures abroad at the expense of attention to the urgent problems of economic reconstruction and social readjustments at home; the recognition also of the fact of the revolution in the international balance of power—the recession of British industry, foreign trade, foreign investments and financial importance before the competition of the United States of America, and the threat to political influence in the world, especially in the Eastern hemisphere, by the emergence of USSR as a super-power.

The realism also showed itself in realising that the India of the mid-twentieth century could no longer be ruled on the principles of the nineteenth century. India was no longer a medieval-minded, feudalism-oriented country of unorganised, mutually indifferent, multitude of socio-religious racial groups. The new consciousness of nationalism had taken firm root among the Indian elite whose influence extended to the masses. It had given proof of its power in the many political resistance movements and in all the elections to central and provincial legislatures. It is true that the consciousness as a result of the Machiavellian policy of the British rulers had become disrupted. Nevertheless there is no denying the fact that both the major communities of India were equally ardent in their patriotic sentiments, and equally keen in their aspirations for independence. The Muslims might have allowed themselves to play the part of British stooges as counterweights against the Congress and obstructed the march towards independence, but since the early thirties there was no doubt regarding the goal towards which they were moving, namely, termination of British dominion in India.

This realisation found expression in the speeches of Linlithgow and Halifax—both Conservatives, and in the speech of Cripps in the House of Commons when defending the statement of February 20. He discussed the two alternatives which faced the British Government—(1) to control India by expanded British civil services and reinforced British troops, which implied a British occupation of the country for at least 15 to 20 years or, (2) to announce that there was a limit of time after which Britain would not continue to exercise its responsibility. He rejected the first alternative because it was against the wishes of the Indian people, and it would be politically impracticable, from both a national and an international point of view, and would arouse the most bitter animosity of all parties in India against Britain.

The cobwebs of imperial glory, which continued to enfold the minds

of men like Churchill, were at last swept aside by the leader of the Labour Government. By a bold stroke of policy he provided the means to break the deadlock in Indian politics.

On February 20 Attlee made the following statement in the House of Commons :

"His Majesty's Government desire to hand over their responsibility to authorities established by a constitution approved by all parties in India in accordance with the Cabinet Mission's plan. But unfortunately there is at present no clear prospect that such a constitution and such authorities will emerge. The present state of uncertainty is fraught with danger and cannot be indefinitely prolonged. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. . . . But if it should appear that such a constitution will not have been worked out before the time mentioned in paragraph 7 (above), His Majesty's Government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing provincial Governments, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people."[46]

The statement was a challenge—unity if the Congress and League could agree on its form, division into sovereign and independent states in case of failure to agree. Unfortunately by February 1947, much water had flowed down the bridge. The dream of an independent Pakistan had captured the Muslim mind in spite of its vague dimness as that of independent India with its clear lineaments had captivated the Congress. Wavell's hesitancies, sympathy for the Muslim League and realisation of the consequence of antagonising the Congress, and the tantalising expectancy on the part of the people of the proximate end of British Raj, had greatly affected the prestige of Government. Present authority was losing its hold, future authority was indiscoverable, this demoralised the public servants and encouraged the lawless elements.

The broad differences in outlook between the Viceroy misled by the prejudiced bureaucracy in India and the Labour Government which had recently won the confidence of the people for its radical programme and ideology, exhibited in the bitter attacks of the die-hard Conservative members of Parliament on Cripps, and the conflict of ideas among the British ruling classes between the advocates of unity against those who regarded partition as a necessity, created confusion and uncertainty.

[46] *House of Commons Debates*, 5th Series, Vol. 433 (1947), cols. 1395-8.

The Prime Minister's declaration put an end to this embarrassing state. In order to execute the new policy it was necessary to entrust the Viceroyalty into new hands. Wavell had failed to win the confidence of the most popular and the most influential political party in India—namely the Congress; unfortunately he had not succeeded in earning the gratitude and fulfilling the expectations of the other party, the Muslim League. Wavell's schemes of graduated disengagement of British armed forces, of persistence with the Cabinet Mission plan, or political retraction and of securing Hindu-Muslim settlement, were unworkable in the existing conditions which demanded immediate and clearcut operation.

Attlee finding Wavell's attitude and views unsuitable for dealing with the Indian situation, announced his replacement by Admiral the Viscount Mountbatten, who was to be entrusted with the task of transferring to Indian hands responsibility for the government of British India in a manner that would best ensure the future happiness and prosperity of India.

Gandhiji's reaction to the statement was favourable. He observed that whatever might have been the history of British rule in the past, there was not a shadow of doubt that the British were going to quit India in the near future. The statement put the burden on the various parties of doing what they thought best. It was up to them to make or mar the situation[47].

Nehru wrote to Gandhiji. "Mr. Attlee's statement contains much that is indefinite and likely to give trouble. But I am convinced that it is in the final analysis a brave and definite statement. It meets our oft-repeated demand for quitting India."[48]

The Congress Working Committee met on March 8. While welcoming the fixing of a date for the final transfer of power, it urged that the transfer should be preceded by the recognition in practice of the Interim Government as a Dominion Government with effective control over services and administration and with the Viceroy as its constitutional head. It accepted the essence of the British Government's policy decision. "It has been made clear that the constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly will apply only to those areas which accept it." It claimed that any province or part of a province which accepted the constitution and desired to join the Union could not be prevented from doing so. It simultaneously proposed partition of the Panjab into two provinces. It invited the Muslim League representatives to meet the Congress representatives in order to consider the new situation and devise means to meet it[49].

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[47] Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase*, Vol. I, p. 566.
[48] Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru : The First Sixty Years*, Vol. II, p. 305.
[49] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, pp. 118-9.

The Muslim League rejoiced that at last the British Government had made it clear that power would not necessarily be handed over to a single government for the whole of India. The statement had said enough to encourage Muslim hopes that Pakistan could be won with British acquiescence. It made no response to the invitation of the Congress Working Committee to a conference. Jinnah, however, refused to comment on the statement.

The debate in Parliament on the announcement brought out the deep difference which existed among the different sections of its members. In the House of Lords, Templewood, ex-Secretary of State for India, described the statement as unconditional surrender. Simon said that the end of this business was not going to be the establishment of peace in India, but rather that it was going to degrade the British name. But Halifax urged, "if this chapter of Indian history has to come to an end, there is no better way of closing it than by offering to assist India's passage to a new order, and this would be the spirit of the message I would like to see this House send to India tonight."[50]

In the House of Commons, Cripps, defending the statement of February 20, gave reasons for fixing a date for withdrawing from India. John Anderson opposed the fixing of a definite and final date for handing over power. He indicted the Government on three counts—their action was reckless, their negligence in considering the measures necessary for the maintenance of efficiency in future, and their gamble in fixing a date. Churchill accused the Government for departing from the principles on which Cripps offer was made in 1942, for summoning the Constituent Assembly and entrusting the Interim Government to "a leader of the caste Hindus, Mr. Nehru". He concluded his speech with the peroration : "It is with deep grief that I watch the clattering dow of the British Empire with all its glories and all the services it has rendered to mankind. . . . . . We should do everything in all these circumstances and exclude no expedients that may help to mitigate the ruin and disaster which will follow the disappearance of Great Britain's power in the East."[51]

Attlee replied to the deb[ate] opened by Cripps. The amendment of Anderson moved on behal[f of t]he Opposition was defeated by 337 votes to 135, and the Gover[nment] motion was carried without a division. The battle of India's [freedo]m was at last won.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 159.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PARTITION AND INDEPENDENCE

I. Muslim League's Machinations for Pakistan

Attlee's statement of February 20, definitely fixed the date of British abdication, but it was ambiguous concerning the succession. The two alternatives contained in the statement for the future of India were meant to please both the Congress and the League. They offered, on the one hand, a sop to the Congress demand for unity, but on the other, definitely provided that in case a constitution for the united India was not worked out by a fully representative Assembly before June 1948, the Government would consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India could be handed over—whether to some form of Central Government, or in such other way as might seem most reasonable.

The Muslim League understood the second alternative to imply that if it continued to boycott the Constituent Assembly till June 1948, so as to make it not a fully representative Assembly, the Government would be obliged to hand over power to the Muslim majority provinces, that is, concede Pakistan. Therefore the statement gave them encouragement to persist in the course which they had already adopted. They consequently spurned the invitation of the Congress Working Committee for a conference. Hodson drew the correct conclusion, "The statement of 20th February 1947, in the context of Indian politics was thus an open licence for Pakistan in some form or other."[1]

The comment of the London *Times* was, "Muslim separatism is deriving encouragement from the language of the White Paper."[2]

But although the Muslim League struck the pose of self-confidence in public, the fact was that Wavell and the bureaucrats were more firmly convinced of the necessity of Pakistan than the Muslims in their hearts. This is borne out by the shape of Muslim affairs then. Previous to Attlee's statement the situation was not very roseate; Sind and Bengal were favourable to Pakistan because their governments were in the hands of the Muslim Leaguers. But three provinces—the Panjab, the North-West Frontier Province, and Assam were outside the control of the Muslim League.

In the Panjab although the League held 79 seats in an Assembly

[1] Hodson, H. V., *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[2] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, p. 100.

of 175, Khizr Hayat Khan, the leader of the Unionist Party, headed a coalition government. It became, therefore, a matter of both prestige and self-justification for the League to oust Khizr Hayat Khan and establish a Muslim League government.

In order to achieve this the League organised Direct Action—demonstrations and agitation. The Muslim League's private army, the Muslim National Guard, was raised. The League leaders courted arrest and excited religious fanaticism. Then, a civil disobedience movement was started in which thousands of women and men defying orders, shouting slogans, hoisted the League flags over government buildings, etc.

In sympathy with the Panjab, demonstrations and *hartals* were staged in many towns all over India.

Khizr Hayat tried first to suppress the movement. He banned the Muslim National Guard and the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh and jailed the League leaders.

But then he was pressed to relent and refrain from the use of force. In order to pour oil over troubled waters he assured the Muslims that he had no desire to suppress the League. But he was not prepared to yield to threats and was determined to preserve the Panjab from communal strife.

But the change of treatment did not abate violence. On February 20, the statement of Prime Minister Attlee was broadcast in which the Muslim League's demand for an independent Muslim state was accepted. On February 26, a compromise between the Unionist Government and the Muslim League was effected. The ban against the volunteer organisations was lifted. The League leaders were released and the agitation was called off. Then suddenly to the surprise of all Khizr Hayat Khan resigned on March 3. His public explanation for the important step was hardly convincing. Till the end of February he had been proclaiming the determination of his Government not to surrender to the show of force by the League, but within a week of that brave statement he felt that the situation had so changed that it was necessary for him to retire and leave the field for the Muslim League.

According to Alan Campbell-Johnson, "The Muslim Coalition Prime Minister had for the past five months been compelled to move from house to house each night to avoid the threat of assassination at the hands of the Moslem League."[3]

But Khizr Hayat Khan's resignation was not the result of threats to his life, which like a brave man he ignored. What compelled him to give up was the revolution which had been effected in Indian

[3] Campbell-Johnson, A., *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 32.

politics by the Attlee statement of February 20. It convinced him that the Panjab would go to Pakistan, but the change in the Government of India was an even stronger argument.

The Panjab Government had depended upon the support of the provincial Governor and the Central Government ever since 1935. Neither the blandishments nor the threats of the Muslim League had changed his settled views about the method of governing the Panjab. Fazli Husain was the originator of the Unionist Party which consisted of the rural elite—landlords belonging to the three communities. He had the backing of the then Government of India and the Governor of the Panjab. Sikandar Hayat Khan followed the same policy relying upon the same support. By the time of Khizr Hayat, however, the Government of India's policy was modified. The Government wanted the Panjab to remain outside the control of Jinnah, for during the war the Panjab was one of the main recruiting grounds for the army. But in the general politics of the country the Government favoured Jinnah as a make-weight against the Congress.

When the war ended, the need to keep the Panjab outside the influence of the League disappeared. Wavell was anxious to bring the League into the Interim Government. He induced Jinnah to accept five ministerial posts by giving him various promises. In October 1946 the five League members joined with the avowed purpose to ensure the establishment of Pakistan.

Naturally their main target was the Panjab. They tried threats but Khizr was not intimidated. But when as members of the Government of India they exerted their influence on the Panjab affairs and encouraged the officials to make difficulties for the Government, he found his position untenable.

Noon and other high officials urged upon him the desirability of resignation. Thus thwarted by the League organisation, opposed by the League ministers in the Government of India, abandoned by the provincial officials, no alternative was left for him but to relinquish office.

The resignation was, however, a signal for fresh disturbances, and on March 5, the Governor took over the administration of the Province under Section 93.

II. Disturbances

The League had succeeded in ousting Khizr Hayat and his anti-League Government, but the Province had not come under Muslim League rule. This infuriated the League and exacerbated communal bitterness. The result was the prevalence of wide-spread lawlessness

and rioting all over the Panjab and the North-West Frontier Province. Nehru visited the riot-affected areas and saw ghastly scenes. He said, "I have heard of behaviour by human beings which would degrade brutes."

Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi, and other towns suffered grievously from the ravages of the rioters.[4]

In the North-West Frontier Province the existence of the Congress Government with Dr. Khan Sahib as the Chief Minister was an eyesore to the League. The Muslim League started a vigorous propaganda against the Ministry. Its leaders used the reports of the riots and massacre of Muslims in Bihar and raised the slogan of 'Islam in danger' They appealed to the tribes of the frontier and beyond the boundary of India who were largely under the influence of the Mullahs. The Pir of Manki Sharif joined the League to rally the masses against the Congress ministry.

This led to serious outbreaks of violence in the Province and the border districts. Dera Ismail Khan, Hazara and Bannu districts were seriously affected.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan addressing a public meeting at Charsadda on 27th April, stated : "The present disturbances in the country naturally lead me to suspect that there is a big plot and conspiracy behind them. It is not the love of God, Islam, or love of the country, but it is the love of their departing English masters whom their friends do not want to go from India. There seems to be an organised attempt to create a situation so that Indians themselves may request the British people to remain in India."[5]

How far there was actually collusion between the Muslim League leaders and the British and Muslim officials in fanning the communal frenzy it is not possible to judge. The role of Abdul Rab Nishtar, a member of the Interim Government, was openly talked about. Nehru had affirmed as early as November 21, 1946, at the Lucknow session of the Congress that "there is a mental alliance between the League and senior British officials."[6]

Moon writes, "Of several British officers the story was told, that appealed to by panic-stricken Hindus for help and protection, they referred the petitioners to Gandhi, Nehru and Patel."[7]

The Muslim League's claim to Assam where the Muslims were only one-third of the total population, was wholly untenable. But an effort was made to include the Province in Pakistan. A civil dis-

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[4] For communal riots in the Panjab in 1947 see Tuker, *While Memory Serves*, pp. 272-75; and Moon, P., *Divide and Quit*, pp. 77-79.
[5] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, p. 234.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 112(c).
[7] Moon, P., *op. cit.*, p. 79.

obedience movement was started on the issue of eviction of the Bengali Muslim immigrants who had occupied the Government reserves along the eastern border. The object of the League was to inflate the Muslim population of Assam, and bands of Bengali Muslims were organised to infiltrate forcibly into the reserves. The Government was obliged to seek the aid of the military.

Thus the state of affairs at the time the new Viceroy arrived in India was grim. The political atmosphere was electric, the administration was infected with communalism and its impartiality was fast disappearing, the Indian economy was deteriorating. The Indian States were in a state of suspense with British paramountcy on the way out and relations with independent India undetermined. The Interim Government was divided into two factions "determined not to cooperate with each other. They were all unanimous that this system could not continue much longer, without the greatest injury to the country as a whole."[8] Vallabhbhai Patel, the Home Member in the Interim Government, referring to these days declared, that "there were British bureaucrats in every department of the state who were found to be mortgaging India's interests in course of their routine duties."[9]

Conditions could hardly be worse. Inevitably a frightful catastrophe loomed large upon the horizon.

III. A New Viceroy Tackles Indian Problem

On March 24 Mountbatten was sworn in as the new Viceroy of India. He was avowedly appointed to arrange the termination of British rule in India. His assignment was extraordinary and he had to be armed with extraordinary authority to execute it. Prime Minister Attlee in his Letter of Instructions to the new Viceroy reminded him of the salient points which he had to keep in mind in dealing with the situation :

(1) to aim at establishing a government in India on the basis of the Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16;

(2) in case this was not achieved by October 1, to report to Government in England the steps considered necessary for handing over power by June 1948;

(3) not to hand over power and obligations under Paramountcy to any successor government earlier than the date of transfer of power, but to begin negotiations with individual states for adjusting their relations with the Crown;

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[8] Lord Ismay's speech quoted in *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947; Vol. I, p. 112(g).

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 112(f).

(4) to treat the Interim Government with the same consultation and consideration as a Dominion Government and give it the greatest possible freedom in the day-to-day exercise of the administration of the country;

(5) to maintain the closest cooperation with the Indians, and the Indian leaders;

(6) to stress the importance of ensuring that the transfer of power was effected with full regard to the defence requirements of India, of avoiding any breach in the continuity and organisation of the Army, and of collaboration in the security of the Indian Ocean.[10]

Before accepting the appointment, Mountbatten insisted upon the fulfilment of certain conditions. In the first place, he emphasized the need of fixing a time limit for the transfer of power as demanded by the Indian leaders. Attlee's declaration of February 20, conceded this. Then he demanded full powers to carry out the policy with which he was entrusted, without constant reference to or interference by His Majesty's Government in London. Attlee and the Cabinet agreed and they gave him unprecedented authority for accomplishing his assignment. Sapru's Grand Mughal had become incarnate in Mountbatten and enthroned in Delhi. Thus armed, he did not merely negotiate and persuade as his predecessors the War Cabinet emissary Cripps and the Cabinet Mission had done, but he negotiated, persuaded, decided, and imposed his decisions.

Mountbatten by his natural endowment was eminently qualified and by the favourable concourse of circumstances was well placed for the kind of success in his difficult enterprise which he contemplated. It is true that Attlee gave him only a forty per cent chance of accomplishing his task. But this pessimistic estimate was based upon the failures in the past and did not take into consideration some important factors which failure itself had accentuated.

Mountbatten was in the prime of his life when he assumed the Viceroyalty. He was forty-six years old. His physical and mental powers were at their very best. He possessed an enormous fund of energy and resilience. He was swift in taking decisions, but was not obstinate. Frank and courteous, his manners were winning. Not only Nehru but many others succumbed to his dangerous charm. He had few prejudices of colour, class or race. Although a blue-blooded aristocrat, the scion of a royal family, he was neither reactionary, nor vain, nor aloof. On the contrary, he was a liberal democrat, at ease with all sorts and classes of men. He was indifferent to protocol, adaptable to different situations.

He had undertaken in a short time the solution, of a knotty pro-

[10] Text given by Michael Edwardes in the *Last Years of the British Raj*, pp. 145-7; also Connell, J., *Auchinleck*, pp. 864-5.

blem which had defied all attempts so far. He was naturally so deeply immersed in the details of his immediate task that he could hardly be expected to take thought of the morrow. He knew that Pakistan was a mad project, that it was no solution of the communal problem, that it jeopardised the long-term interests of both the Hindus and the Muslims, that it condemned divided India to play in international affairs an inferior role, and that it slackened the progress of the country and hindered the removal of the ills from which it suffered, yet deliberately he hustled to a decision which entailed prolonged injury to the well-being of the teeming millions of India.

His excuse was that he was projected into the field of action about 18 months later than he should have been with the result that in the meanwhile the situation had so deteriorated that it was beyond proper remedy. The excuse was tenable, because only a miracle could have saved the situation in that highly surcharged atmosphere where emotional excitement was at its worst and opinions stood in uncompromising conflict.

Mountbatten immediately plunged into his peremptory duties. He had first to determine which of the two alternative plans should be chosen—the one which preserved the unity of India, but gave the widest powers to autonomous provinces and grouped them into sub-federations with their own constitutions, or the other which divided India into two sovereign and independent states consisting of areas occupied by the majority of a community. The first plan was based upon the maintenance of the integrity of the existing provinces and their unity in an emasculated centre; the second contemplated the partition of the provinces of the Panjab, Bengal and Assam into two provinces each, separating the Hindu-dominated districts from the Muslim districts.

In order to ascertain the opinion of the leaders of the parties he held interviews from March 24 to the middle of April. Then he convened a conference of the Governors of the Provinces. Meantime he reviewed the events and held conversations daily with the members of his staff in order to think aloud and clarify his mind.

Among the leaders of the Congress he met Nehru quite often, Patel several times, and came to the conclusion that these two were the key-men in the Congress Party. He first saw Gandhiji on the afternoon of March 31st and then from time to time. Although Gandhiji was no longer the dictator of the Congress he was still of the first importance as he could sway the opinion of the Congress. At the very first interview he suggested that in order to resolve the deadlock the Viceroy should entrust the government to Jinnah, but this did not command the assent of the Congress leaders.

Jinnah met Mountbatten at dinner on the night of 6th April and

saw him again several times. He was full of grouses against the Congress. He wanted a quick decision and a surgical operation. He turned down Gandhiji's proposal because it entailed authority without responsibility.

Mountbatten met other leading Congressmen, like Azad, Kripalani, Krishna Menon, as also Liaqat Ali Khan, the Secretary of the Muslim League and "henchman" of Jinnah. Among the representatives of the Sikhs he interviewed Baldev Singh, Master Tara Singh and others. He discussed the affairs of the Indian States with the rulers of Bikaner and Bhopal, who belonged to two opposite factions among Princes and complained against each other's conduct.

Among others who saw him were John Mathai, Khan Sahib and Mirza Ismail.

It is interesting to read the record of his impressions of his visitors. He was impressed by the frankness and fair-mindedness of Nehru and, in fact, developed very friendly relations with him. Nehru who was a man of high principles and of independent views, was amenable to personal influence and had a curious weakness for deferring to the judgement of strong, self-confident, friendly men of character and integrity. Thus, in spite of his profound differences with Gandhiji, he always submitted to the decisions of the latter—whom he affectionately called Bapu. Nehru showed somewhat similar respect for Mountbatten's views.

Patel struck him as a strong, sturdy and capable organizer, possessed of great common sense and realism. He considered Patel worthy of cultivation.

But his estimate of Jinnah was mixed. Although in his opinion Jinnah possessed a sharp mind, legal finesse and subtlety, he was reserved, haughty and aloof. Mountbatten's first reaction on meeting Jinnah was, "My God, he was cold."[11] Ismay who was Chief of the Viceroy's Staff thought, "he (Jinnah) shows himself wholly unaware of the administrative implications of his policy."[12]

Gandhiji was an enigmatic figure to those men of honour and rectitude whose values of life were not the same as his—both among Englishmen and Indians, for instance, Irwin (later Halifax) was not sure whether Gandhiji was a saint or a shrewd politician, and Irwin was a pious and high-minded Englishman. Gandhiji's policies were always tested on the touchstone of purely moral principles. His suggestion to transfer the Interim Government from the Congress ministers to Jinnah and the Muslim League was completely misunderstood and indeed regarded fantastic. But examined in the light of the accepted

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[11] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Congress creed of the identity of communities how could anybody take exception to a government of the Indian nationals on the ground of their religion ? The Congress had objected to parity based on community of caste Hindus and Muslims, but had accepted a coalition based on political parity. When it was obvious that the coalition did not work, the logical alternative was to hand over government to one or the other party in the coalition. But in a climate reeking with communalism, the Congress Working Committee failed to rise equal to its creed and disapproved of Gandhiji's proposal. He was thus obliged to withdraw from the negotiations.

While meeting the Indian Party leaders, Mountbatten who had come to certain conclusions regarding the transfer of power, considered it desirable to seek the advice of the members of his Council as well as the Governors of the Provinces. He invited the Governors to Delhi and held a Conference on April 15.

The Governor of the Panjab, Evan Jenkins, drew a lurid picture of the conditions in the province and discussed the partition of the province. Olaf Caroe of the North-West Frontier Province spoke of the political crisis which demanded resolution by an election which was opposed by the Congress Government of the Frontier Province, while the Muslim Leaguers who stood to gain by it were in gaol. In Bengal the relations between the League Chief Minister Suhrawardy and League President Jinnah were far from cordial, and the idea of partition was not favoured. Assam was perturbed about the position of the Europeans on the tea estates. But it was possible for Assam to opt out of the group to which it was assigned. The Governors of Bombay and Madras were not worried.

It was clear from the statements of the Governors that while parts of India were agitated over the future, "a greater part was calm and quiet and ready to accept any reasonable solution".

As the days of March and April passed the dark clouds over the land were thickening. Bickerings within the Interim Government were threatening the breakdown of the administration. In the western provinces waves of disturbances and disorder were leaping skywards. In Bengal the situation was explosive. The League leader Liaqat Ali Khan was pressing for the division of the Army.

The hostility between the two communities had acquired frightening proportions.

Mountbatten and his advisers—Ismay and Abell who at the time of leaving England in March considered June 1948 as a very short interval for accomplishing the gigantic operations of transfer of power, had changed their opinion. "They realized what they were doing was not so much handing India her freedom but washing their hands off

her; and once the mood of disillusion was upon them, they would listen to no voices which counselled calm reflection and deliberation."[13]

So the first conviction of Mountbatten was that the transfer should not be deferred to June 1948, but antedated—perhaps to December 1947, perhaps earlier.

Mountbatten was convinced that immediate action was necessary and that action must be political. While talking to the political leaders and reviewing the situation daily with his staff he rapidly formed a number of conclusions. One was that the partition of India and the establishment of Pakistan were inevitable. But this decision should not come from the British but should be made by the Indian leaders.

But this vital conclusion involved the question of the character of the constitution of the successor states. The British interests demanded that the successor governments should have the status of the Dominions, so that British investments and other economic interests would be safeguarded. The Dominion Status would naturally ensure membership of the Commonwealth.

Mountbatten also considered that the two governments should have common arrangements for the defence of India, and retain the integrity of the army. This need not, however, mean a permanent constitutional organ at the centre or any kind of union of the two states, but could be achieved by means of *ad hoc* consultative conferences of the representatives of the states negotiating on the basis of parity. Foreign affairs, defence and communications would be the subjects of these consultations.

Lastly in conceding the Muslim League demand of Pakistan, it would be necessary to placate the Hindus by severing the Hindu majority areas from the Panjab, Bengal and Assam and joining them with India.

The procedure suggested was to transfer power initially to the provinces and the States and groups of States, and then the States would decide the constitution of the central Government.

The key to the success of a scheme built upon these ideas lay in the hands of the Congress and League leaders. It was necessary, therefore, to persuade them to accept these principles. The two chief persons concerned on the Congress side were Nehru and Patel and on the League side Jinnah.

The Congress was committed to an independent and sovereign India. Nehru laid much stress upon such a status, although he approved of India's membership of the Commonwealth. Patel, on the other hand, was not rigid. V. P. Menon had converted him to the view that in substance Dominion Status with option to secede was

[13] Mosley L., *op. cit.*, p. 110.

equivalent to independence; and that the acceptance of Dominion Status would bring immediate self-government, and that the establishment of Pakistan would be good riddance from an embarrassing predicament. He was, therefore, satisfied with the Dominion Status. Both, Nehru and Patel desired a strong central government, but for the sake of the unity of India were prepared to accept the largest amount of autonomy for the provinces including the control of residuary powers. Therefore the Congress by its January 1947 resolution had accepted the Cabinet Mission plan in its entirety and the December 6, 1946 Cabinet interpretation of the clause concerning the provincial grouping. In April, it even conceded the formation of an independent Pakistan on condition that the provinces of the Panjab and Bengal would be divided and the Hindu-majority districts constituted as provinces of Hindustan.

Regarding Assam the Congress would agree to a plebiscite in the district of Sylhet whose population was Muslim by majority. It also desired that the North-West Frontier Province should be given the choice to remain out of Pakistan, and its will ascertained in a democratic manner. It also insisted upon the continuation both of the Constituent Assembly as a whole to draw up the Indian Constitution based on the division of India, and the Interim Government minus the League ministers for the purposes of administration.

On the contentious question of India's division into two states, Gandhiji and Azad were irrevocably committed to resist it. Nehru was won over by the charm and advocacy of Mountbatten aided by the valuable support of Lady Mountbatten, by the arguments of V. P. Menon and by the irritating attitude of the Muslim League to the immediate setting up of an Indian constitution on the Dominion model. He declared on April 20, "the Muslim League can have Pakistan, if they wish to have it, but on the condition that they do not take away other parts of India which do not wish to join Pakistan."[14] Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, further clarified the position on April 28 in the Assembly:

"While we have accepted the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16, 1946, which contemplated a Union of the different provinces and States within the country, it may be that the Union may not comprise all provinces. If that unfortunately comes to pass, we shall have to be content with a constitution for a part of it.....This may mean not only the division of India, but a division of some provinces. For this we must be prepared and the Assembly may have to draw up a Constitution based on such a division."[15]

[14] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, pp. 359-60.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 360.

The demands of the Muslim League had kept growing since 1940, when Pakistan resolution was adopted. Pakistan was then defined as "the regions consisting of the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority." But in 1947 Pakistan was stated to consist of five entire provinces together with Baluchistan and a corridor running for nearly a thousand miles through Hindustan connecting the Western wing with the Eastern wing of Pakistan.

In the second place Pakistan thus conceived was to be a sovereign and independent state.

Thirdly, no provision would be acceptable for any common purposes and specially no permanent organ of state to discharge such functions.

From this it followed that there would be two defence forces and two heads of state.

The Muslim League, however, was agreeable to the status of a Dominion and the membership of the Commonwealth. But it wholly repudiated the Cabinet Mission plan.

The Muslim League was approached through Ismay and Abell. Jinnah was talked to by Mountbatten himself. He overcame Jinnah's objection to the partition of the Panjab and Bengal by bluntly telling him that his insistence on the transfer of the entire provinces to Pakistan might jeopardise the creation of Pakistan itself.

These discussions seemed to revolve round a number of points—(1) partition on the basis of provinces or parts of provinces, both to be decided by the will of the people declared through the provincial legislature; (2) the provision of some form of central authority or Supreme Defence Council to deal with the defence of India; and (3) the question of an interim government for the period during which the constitution was being framed.

A committee consisting of Mountbatten, Ismay, Mieville and Abell then met the political leaders—Nehru, Patel, Jinnah, Liaqat Ali and Baldev Singh, individually and discussed these points.

By the middle of April the outline of the scheme was clear in the Viceroy's mind. He had already obtained the approval of the Governors of the provinces. The attitude of the Congress and the League was ascertained by Mieville.

Expecting the approval of the Parties, Mountbatten in an exuberant mood entrusted the formulation of the scheme to the members of his personal staff (facetiously described as Dickie Birds), ignoring V. P. Menon, the official Constitutional Adviser and Reforms Commissioner of the Government.

This was a serious blunder. The Viceroy's staff was dominated by such pro-Pakistani officers as Ismay and Abell, and contained no one who could strongly press the Congress point of view for consideration.

They set to work with over-confidence in their capability and produced what came to be known as the First Draft.

Mountbatten not realising that the important development needed the support or acquiescence of the Parties concerned, but relying upon his powers of cajolement and persuasion, gave his approval

The draft of the Mountbatten plan was sent to London on May 2 for information and advice to the Prime Minister. While his messengers Ismay and Abell were preparing for the journey to England, Mountbatten undertook a visit to the North-West Frontier Province where great tension prevailed on account of the Direct Action campaign of the Muslim League against the Congress Government. He tried to persuade Khan Sahib to agree to hold fresh elections and promised that, in that case, Jinnah would call off civil disobedience. Khan Sahib told him that with religious passions inflamed by Mullahs, it was quite undesirable to agree to the Viceroy's suggestion, specially in view of the fact that the last elections which were contested by the League were held not more than a year ago.

After a three-day tour the Viceroy returned to Delhi where he discussed the political situation with Gandhiji and Jinnah. He requested them to sign a joint appeal to the people to maintain peace and abstain from violence. The appeal fell utterly flat. Mountbatten awaiting the return of his messengers proceeded to Simla.

IV. The First Draft of the Plan

The draft plan was confidential, but had been shown to Nehru and Jinnah before being sent to London. It evoked criticism. Both Gandhiji and Jinnah in their interviews expressed dissatisfaction, "the net effect of which made Mountbatten wonder whether Ismay's departure had not been premature." Nehru wrote to him in very explicit language that although the Congress had accepted the principle of self-determination, it would insist on the division of the Panjab and Bengal. It would oppose the proposal to hold elections in the North-West Frontier Province forced by League terroism.

Jinnah protested strongly against the division of the provinces.

After despatching the draft plan to London, Mountbatten made a brief visit to Simla. Here the various items of the draft plan were discussed, and in these deliberations V. P. Menon was included for the first time. He was very critical of the features of the plan sent to London. He believed that the unity of India was unrealisable and, therefore, favoured the division of India into two states and the formation of two governments on the basis of Dominion Status. This would ensure the Congress objectives of a strong central government and a

democratic constitution unhampered by communal considerations. He discussed his views with Nehru who had arrived in Simla to stay with the Viceroy, and found his opinion was on the whole favourable.

On May 10, the Viceroy received back the plan approved by the Cabinet, with certain modifications. On this it was announced in the press that the Viceroy had invited Nehru, Jinnah, Patel, Liaqat Ali Khan and Baldev Singh to meet him in Delhi on May 17 to discuss the future constitution.

Meanwhile Mountbatten had a sudden hunch that he should show the plan revised by the Cabinet to Nehru. Nehru's reaction on seeing the revised draft was violent. He vehemently denounced the plan, spent the night in drafting his memorandum of objections and delivered it to Mountbatten on the morning of the 11th. The letter read as follows:

"The picture presented by the proposals in the Plan is an ominous one. Not only do they menace India, but they endanger the future relations between Britain and India. Instead of producing any sense of certainty, security and stability, they would encourage disruptive tendencies everywhere and chaos and weakness. They would particularly endanger important strategic means.....The inevitable consequences of the proposals would be to invite the Balkanization of India; to provoke certain civil conflict and add to violence and disorder; to cause a further breakdown of the central authority, which could alone prevent the growing chaos, and to demoralize the army, the police and the Central services.....This plan with no clear background would produce nothing but confusion, and the transfer of power, instead of being made without dislocation, would be obstructed by violence, by a mass of complications, and by weakness of the Central Government and its organs. ....I have no doubt that the Congress will not accept the proposals."[16]

Mountbatten was in a panic. His apple-cart had been suddenly upset. But he had been fortunately saved from disaster. He told his staff at lunch, without that hunch, "Dickie Mountbatten would have been finished and could have packed his bags.[17]" The programme announced for May 17 had to be cancelled, the Secretary of State informed of the new situation, and the conference postponed to June. Meanwhile a new plan had to be prepared post-haste.

Menon was now brought in and asked to prepare a fresh plan. Nehru felt that Menon's approach was correct and would not be unacceptable to the Congress. Thereupon Meno proceeded in hot haste to draft the second plan. He completed his work in the course of the

[16] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, pp. 123-24.

[17] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.*, p. 89.

afternoon and showed it to Nehru before he left Simla by the evening train. Mountbatten apprised the Secretary of State of the developments.

Mountbatten paid later a generous tribute to Menon, "It was indeed fortunate that you were Reforms Commissioner on my staff, and that thus we were brought together into close association with one another at a very early stage, for you were the first person I met who entirely agreed with the idea of Dominion Status, and you found the solution which I had not thought of, of making it acceptable by a very early transfer of power. History must always rate that decision very high, and I owe it to your advice; advice given in the teeth of considerable opposition from other advisers."[18]

In the new situation personal consultation with the Viceroy was necessary and Mountbatten received an invitation on the 15th May from the Prime Minister to proceed to London.

Before leaving the Viceroy held consultations with Nehru and Patel on behalf of the Congress, Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan for the Muslim League, and Baldev Singh for the Sikhs. Nehru gave his approval to the new draft in writing. Jinnah accepted it verbally but not in writing. Mountbatten after obtaining these assurances left for London on May 18, accompanied by the author of the plan, V. P. Menon.

V. The Troubles of the Interim Government

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to explain the causes of such precipitate activity on the part of the Viceroy. The fact was that communal relations were rapidly worsening, the country was in turmoil and the Government on tenterhooks. Patel had spoken in despair to Mountbatten, "you will not govern yourself and you will not let anyone else govern."

The conflict within the Government reached the boiling point at the time Wavell was retiring. The budget of the next year was on the anvil. Liaqat Ali Khan, the Finance Minister, put forward a proposal which imposed a heavy burden of a 25 per cent tax on business profits over £ 7,500 per annum, which mostly affected the Hindus and the supporters of the Congress. It was a shrewd attempt to kill two birds with one stone—ruin the Hindu rich and turn them against the Congress. The Congress ministers felt both embarrassed and annoyed. Then they appealed to Mountbatten whose intervention helped to overcome the crisis. But the antagonism continued and Patel threatened that if the Leaguers were not removed, the Congress party would resign. Both

[18] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 127.

Nehru and Patel were constrained to admit that unity was impossible and therefore partition was inevitable.

It was the avowed aim of the League ministers to destroy the Interim Government from within, and to hasten "a surgical operation" for the establishment of Pakistan.

Patel referring to the days before the transfer of power said in a speech : "My experience of office for one year had convinced me that the way we had been proceeding would lead to disaster. We would not then have had one Pakistan but several. There would have been Pakistan cells in every office."[19] In another speech he explained in the Constituent Assembly how the British compelled the Congress leaders to barter their cherished ideal of Indian unity for an early transfer of power, by the use of their reserve powers and control over the services and by their paramountcy over the States. The example of the use of the first was the havoc wrought in the five districts of the Panjab under five British officers, and how he, the Home Minister, failed in his efforts to get them transferred and removed.

The second was illustrated by the intrigues of the Political Department which held the States under its thrall. "The officials of the Department were actually on the point of mortgaging the immense natural resources of Bastar State in the Eastern States Agency to the Nizam on a long lease, when he put his foot down and saved the State."[20] He gave his reasons for the acceptance of Pakistan in these words : "I agreed to partition as a last resort, when we had reached a stage when we would have lost all."[21]

The Government was impotent as the result of the inner tussle, the people were in ferment on account of the communal trial of strength. The fires which had been kindled by the killings in Calcutta in August 1946, had sparked the explosion in East Bengal and kept Gandhiji engaged for two months in sprinkling cold water over them in order to extinguish them. But his humanitarian work was hardly begun when Bihar was ablaze, and even such a momentous pronouncement as Attlee's declaration of February 20, 1947, and such a fateful event as the arrival of Mountbatten in Delhi on March 22 could not drag him from his compassionate mission in Bihar to the scene of consultations concerning the destiny of the country.

Bihar's tale of woe excited passions in many other parts of the country. Both the Panjab and the North-West Frontier Province were soon in turmoil. The political tug of war in these provinces whose adherence to the Muslim League was crucial for the fate of Pakistan,

[19] Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi, the Last Phase,* Vol. II, pp. 152-53.
[20] *Ibid.,* pp. 153-54.
[21] *Ibid.,* p. 154.

acquired the ugly features of an incipient civil war. Nehru who toured the border land in the company of Khan Sahib, the Chief Minister, was treated as an unwelcome visitor. He was greeted by hostile demonstrations, anti-Congress slogans, black flags and throwing of stones.

In the North-West Frontier Province the tribes of Hazara and Nandihar were on rampage, and others more or less agitated as a result of the preaching of fanatical Mullahs.

VI. The Second Plan

Mountbatten's consultations with the Prime Minister and the Indian Committee of the Cabinet lasted two days. He utilised the opportunity of his stay in London to meet the leaders of the Opposition and softened their attitude towards the Plan. The Cabinet approved the new plan and drafted the statement to be broadcast on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

Mountbatten returned to India on May 31, and invited the seven leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs to meet him on June 2. They were—Nehru, Patel, Kripalani, Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan, Abdur Rab Nishtar and Baldev Singh. He opened the Conference with the remark that although he had participated in a number of momentous meetings, "he could frankly remember no decisions reached likely to have such an important influence on world history as those which were to be taken at this meeting."[22]

He reminded them that though he did not wish to force the pace against their will, "a terrific sense of urgency had been pressed upon him by everybody to whom he had spoken. They had wanted the present state of uncertainty to cease; therefore the sooner power was transferred the better for all."[23]

He then gave an exposition of the new plan which while not conceding all the demands of any party, represented the largest common measure of what all the parties could accept.

The new plan was communicated to the leaders. The statement after expressing the pious regret of His Majesty's Government for the failure of the major political parties to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 16, 1946, and to evolve for India an agreed constitution, and after noting that a number of provinces under the influence of the Muslim League had decided not to participate in the Constituent Assembly, laid down the plan by which the wishes of the Indian people

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[22] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.*, p. 99
[23] *Ibid.*

could be ascertained concerning their future constitutional arrangements. The plan consisted of the following proposals :

(1) The work of the existing Constituent Assembly would not be interrupted. But the constitution framed by the Assembly would not apply to the parts of India unwilling to accept it;

(2) In order to ascertain the wishes of the different parts two methods were suggested :

Either (a) through the existing Constituent Assembly which would be joined by the representatives of the dissident parts, or

(b) through separate constituent assemblies of the representatives of the dissident parts;

(3) Regarding the provinces the arrangements would be :

(a) Panjab and Bengal—the Legislative Assemblies would be divided into two sections, one for the members belonging to the Muslim majority districts and the second for the non-Muslim districts. If they opted for the partition of the province, each section would join the Constituent Assembly of its choice;

(b) The Legislative Assembly of a province would decide which Constituent Assembly the province would join;

(c) In the North-West Frontier Province the choice would be exercised through a referendum of the electors of the Legislative Assembly;

(d) The district of Sylhet in Assam would also decide by means of a referendum its choice;

(e) The Governor-General would prescribe the method of ascertaining the will of the people of Baluchistan;

(f) There would be elections in the parts of the Panjab and Bengal and in Sylhet for choosing the representatives to the Constituent Assemblies.

(4) There would be negotiations :

(a) between the successor governments concerning the central subjects in regard to the administrative consequence of partition;

(b) between the successor governments and His Majesty's Government for treaties in regard to matters arising out of the transfer of power;

(c) between the parts of the partitioned provinces concerning the administration of provincial subjects;

(5) So far as the Indian States were concerned the policy contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12 May 1946 would apply. The essence of the policy was that His Majesty's Government would cease to exercise the powers of paramountcy, and the rights surrendered

by the States to the Paramount Power would return to the States. It would then be open to the States to enter into political relations with the successor Governments.

The statement ended with the expression of willingness on the part of the British Government to anticipate the date of June 1948 for the handing over of power by the setting up of one independent Indian Government or Governments at an even earlier date.[24]

After the plan had been explained, Mountbatten handed over the statement to the leaders and asked them to let him know their views by midnight. Nehru told the Viceroy that while he could not agree completely he generally accepted the plan. The Congress Working Committee's acceptance was communicated in writing that evening.

Jinnah was reluctant to commit himself and wanted to consult not only the Working Committee but also the All-India League Council before acceptance. At midnight he saw the Viceroy, and was given Churchill's message that if Jinnah did not accept the plan, it would spell the death-knell of his Pakistan dream. On this he nodded his assent.

On the night of June 3, Mountbatten, Nehru, Jinnah and Baldev Singh broadcast their statements on the new plan. Nehru announced his decision of accepting the plan, Baldev Singh declared the plan worthwhile. It marked the opening of a new chapter in history, the entrance of India into its heritage of freedom.

Jinnah's speech was neutral. He did not wish to prejudice the decision of the Muslim League whether the plan should be accepted as a compromise or a settlement, but he desired to help the Viceroy in order that he might fulfil his mission of transfer of power to the people of India in a peaceful and orderly manner.[25]

Gandhiji saw Mountbatten and indicated his approval. In the prayer meeting which he addressed on the 4th of June he regretted the partition of India, but did not put the blame for it on Mountbatten. It was the act of the Congress and the Muslim League, "if both of us—Hindus and Muslims—cannot agree on anything else, then the Viceroy is left with no choice."[26]

The Council of the Muslim League on June 9 passed a resolution accepting the plan in the following terms :

"The Council, therefore, hereby resolves to give full authority to the President of the All-India Muslim League, Qaid-i-Azam Jinnah, to accept the fundamental principles of the Plan as a compromise and

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[24] The text of the statement is given in Gwyer, Sir M., and Appadorai, A., *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution*, Vol. II, pp. 660-74; also *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, pp. 143-46.

[25] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, pp. 249-55.

[26] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.*, p. 120.

to leave it to him with full authority to work out all the details of the Plan in an equitable and just manner with regard to carrying out the complete division of India on the basis and fundamental principles embodied in H.M.G.'s Plan, including Defence, Finance and Communications."[27]

The All-Indian Congress Committee in its session of June 14 and 15 endorsed the resolution of the Congress Working Committee of June 2, and resolved by a majority of votes that the Congress accept the proposals embodied in the announcement of June 3.

The Reactions to the Second Plan

The acceptance of the British Plan by the two parties closed the bitter controversy about the unity of India. Jinnah had won, partition was accepted by the Congress, however reluctantly. Freedom was at the doorstep but the long-cherished dream of Indian unity lay shattered. Vivisected and bleeding India encountered a host of foreseen and unforeseen shafts of misfortune. Inevitably there was an agonising searching of hearts, scepticism about the future, and clash of opinion within the ranks of the parties.

Gandhiji felt defeated and foresaken. In the battle between morality and expediency the latter had truimphed. The champions of nationalism, secularism and Indian solidarity had bent their knees before the gods of communalism, dogmatism and disintegration. Gandhiji who had approved the Cabinet Mission Plan, remained uncompromisingly opposed to both the partition of India as well as the provinces. He had affirmed, "anarchy was better than the partition enforced with the bayonets of the British army. Chaos and civil war were not too great a price to pay for averting the division of India into mutually hostile neighbouring Dominions, with conflicting interests, which might turn them into a hotbed of international intrigue."[28]

How true Gandhiji's forecast was, the melancholy story of subsequent events was to prove. Gandhiji was so disappointed with the developments that when Bidhan Chandra Roy told him "people need your services more than ever", he replied, "What's the good..... Neither the people nor those in power have any use of me. 'Do or Die' becomes me more in the circumstances. I wish to die in harness, taking the name of God with my last breath."[29]

To a co-worker he sadly confided, "everybody is eager to garland my photos and statues. Nobody really wants to follow my advice."[30]

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[27] *The Indian Annual Register,* 1947, Vol. I, p. 258.
[28] Pyarelal, *op. cit.,* pp. 173-74.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 191.
[30] *Ibid.,* p. 209.

At his prayer meeting he remarked, "my life's work seems to be over. I hope God will spare me further humiliation."[31]

When on June 2 the Working Committee formally set the seal on Mountbatten Plan, Gandhiji sorrowfully observed, "though I may be alone in holding this view, I repeat that the division of India can only do harm to the country's future. . . . It hurts me to think that I can see nothing but evil in the partition plan. May be that just as God blinded my vision, so that I mistook the non-violence of the weak—which I now see is a misnomer and contradiction in terms—for true non-violence, He has again stricken me with blindness."[32]

Soon after he left Delhi for Calcutta, but importuned by the Congress leaders to participate on June 14, returned. It stands to his great credit that in spite of his personal, life-long, outspoken disapproval of Pakistan, in order to prevent the loss of prestige of the Congress ministers who had agreed to partition, he lent his support to the resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee. He thus averted a breach in the Congress ranks, and saved the face of his dearest lieutenants—Nehru and Patel.

But Gandhiji was not the only dissenter. Even the Congress leaders had accepted partition more in bitterness and anger than through conviction.

On the other side, the state of affairs in the Muslim majority provinces was problematic. In Bengal Shaheed Suhrawardy had lost credit with Jinnah, and was flirting with the Bengal Hindus to maintain his position. Abul Hashem, the Secretary of the Bengal Muslim League, Muhammad Ali, Minister for Finance, and Suhrawardy, the Chief Minister, came to Gandhiji to discuss the question of a united sovereign Bengal. Sarat Chandra Bose supported the move. He held a conference which was attended by Suhrawardy, Fazlur Rahman (Minister), Muhammad Ali (Finance Minister), Abul Hashem (Secretary, Bengal Provincial Muslim League), Abdul Malak (MLA), Kiran Shankar Ray, and Satya Ranjan Bakshi. They tentatively agreed on the proposal of a united Bengal, and requested Gandhiji's help and advice.

Gandhiji promised to do so if both the Provincial Congress Committee and the Muslim League agreed and at least two-thirds of the Hindus in the executive council and the legislature gave their consent. The conditions were not fulfilled and the move was abandoned. Suhrawardy was later replaced by Muhammad Ali as Chief Minister and his Government affirmed its allegiance to the Muslim League. The Bengal Assembly met in two sections on June 20, and the non-Muslim section carried the resolution in favour of partition.

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 210.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

The Province of the Panjab which was regarded by the League as the bastion of Pakistan was in a precarious position. Since the announcement of February 20 the activities of the Leaguers had been intensified and the communal tension had assumed dangerous proportions.

On March 5, the Governor of the Panjab had taken over the administration according to Section 93 of the Act of 1935. The Muslim League was sore and angry. On the other side, the Hindus and Sikhs were increasingly apprehensive of the impending struggle between the communities. Then the Hindus and Sikhs had little confidence in the impartiality of the Governor who had assumed the powers of Government.

As a result of the combination of these circumstances, the fires of violence burst forth and raged furiously in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi and other places. While Rome burnt, Nero fiddled. Evan Jenkins, the Governor, either lost his nerve or deliberately left the communal antagonists to fight it out. Nehru speaking at the Congress Council meeting on June 14 said :

"Where there were Congress ministries disturbances were brought under control, but where the British exercised authority, there was chaos."

He was horrified and disgusted at the riots in the Panjab, Bengal and elsewhere. He maintained that they were not isolated incidents, they were planned attacks. He observed that in the Panjab there was cent per cent British rule, and despite the efforts of certain senior officers, murder and arson continued. The trouble was most prevalent where there were British officers in charge, and divisions under the control of either Hindu or Muslim officers were comparatively quiet.[33]

The Panjab Legislature held its session on 23rd June. In the Eastern Panjab section verdict was given in favour of partition, in the Western section against it. The first decided to join the existing Constituent Assembly, the second voted for a new Assembly.

The decisions of the Assemblies of Bengal and Panjab ended the long-drawn controversy between the League and the Congress as also the suspense which prevailed concerning the future of the Provinces. But it did not bring any abatement of the orgy of bloodshed, arson, rape and other crime. The harrowing tale of terror-stricken refugees fleeing in their hundreds of thousands from east to west and west to east was the most shameful comment on the initiation of independence in India and the blackest stain on British administration.

The North-West Frontier Province reacted to the events in the Panjab. In the month of March disturbances had broken out. The

[33] *The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, p. 133.

League had organised demonstrations against the Government of the Congress Party. The worsening of the economic situation had aggravated the state of restlessness. The declaration of 20th February had further exacerbated feelings. The League was carrying on its civil disobedience movement which was hardly civil in its character.

The Province presented to Ismay the Chief of the Viceroy's personal staff "a bastard situation", a Muslim majority under a Congress ministry.

In fact the situation was anomalous, because of the dual role of the Governor and the higher officials. They were bound by the constitution, on the one hand, to rule by the advice and under the control of the Ministry, and, on the other, they exercised authority in their dealings with the tribes independently of the ministers and under the control of the Political Department.

The relations between the Ministry and the Governor were far from harmonious and affected law and order. Olaf Caroe, the Governor, was biassed in favour of the League, and according to Abdul Ghaffar Khan, was trying to induce the Ministers to desert the Congress and join the League. His final threat was, "Coalition or general election."[34] A strange demand, for only a year before an election had been fought on the issue of Pakistan and the Ministry had not since then lost the confidence of the Assembly, yet both Caroe and Mountbatten urged on a fresh election.

As these suggestions did not bring about the dismissal of the Khan Sahib Ministry, the agitators resorted to violence and gutted and looted the bazars. Many police officers apparently connived at these nefarious activities, the army did not intervene and the Governor showed sympathy with the League leaders.

The Congress High Command now intervened and gave notice that if the Frontier Province Ministry was tampered with, the Congress would change its attitude towards the new plan. Thereupon Mountbatten conveyed to the League his disinclination to dismiss the Ministry or to hold fresh elections.

But when in June the Congress accepted the partition plan it also conceded the League demand for a referendum in the Frontier Province to determine its choice between Hindustan and Pakistan. The issue in this form placed the people of the province in a false predicament, for it meant that the choice lay between joining the Hindus or the Muslims.

The referendum was, however, held as announced. But before it was held Olaf Caroe was replaced and a commission of British military officers was appointed to conduct the referendum. Unwisely Abdul Ghaffar Khan who wanted the voting to take place on the issue of an

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[34] Pyarelal, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

independent Pakhtoonistan, decided to boycott the referendum, because his proposal was rejected. The result was that the North-West Frontier Province voted 50 to 49 per cent in favour of Pakistan.

In Sind and Baluchistan the position was clear; they opted for Pakistan.

Assam, however, refused to adhere to Pakistani Bengal, but Sylhet by referendum opted for Pakistan.

The situation which existed in the Provinces claimed by the League as belonging to Pakistan did not presage an unambiguous and clear judgement in favour of Pakistan so late as the end of May. Writes Hodson, "It may be doubted whether even Mr. Jinnah would not have shrunk from the prospect of a Pakistan based upon a Punjab torn between Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, and having at its back a pro-Congress or at least divided Frontier Province, with the suspicous opportunist tribes beyond."[35]

But after the declaration of June 3 a rapid transformation took place, and between the 3rd of June and the 18th of July, East Bengal. West Panjab, Sind, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province, and a little later the district of Sylhet, had all expressed their preference for Pakistan. The only credible explanation for the phenomenon is that an external force was steadily pushing the Muslims in the direction of that goal.

This force was undoubtedly the age-old policy of communal separatism which was adopted originally to provide for the sustenance of the Empire, but in time became a habit of mind of the British ruling class irrespective of party or political idealogy, an unquestionable dogma like the geocentrism of medieaval Europe.

The Government had started dangling conspicuously Pakistan before the Muslim community since 1942. Then the Cabinet Mission reinforced it by proposing the three-group division for constitution-making; lastly, Mountbatten made the recognition of Pakistan as the inescapable condition for transfer of power.

The British rulers were more Pakistanophil than the Muslims themselves. The British pushed both the doubting and the unwilling Muslims into the lap of Jinnah, and playing upon the fears and apprehensions, the long-deferred expectations and agonizing yearnings of the Congressmen made them yield to the demand for Pakistan. Mountbatten by his dextrous and resourceful diplomacy succeeded in persuading the Congress to concede a separate and sovereign state to the Muslim League as a bargain for immediate self-government of the status of a Dominion and to give up its original demand for complete independence. At the same time he brought round the Muslim League

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[35] Hodson H.V., *op. cit.*; p 282.

to accept a truncated Pakistan, but an entirely independent and fully self-governing Pakistan. More, he induced both the Congress and the League to 'keep their governments within the orbit of the British Commonwealth, free in all matters yet bound in a common recognition of the King of England as the head of the whole political structure.'

The Mountbatten plan was not, however, a one-sided affair. If it conferred benefits, it also inflicted losses. It conceded independence to India, but it offset the prospective power of a politically united and economically resourceful nation by division into two hostile rivals, the one weakening the other. Their rivalry would oblige them to seek external aid and dependence on powerful countries—especially Britain with which they had intimate and longstanding contacts. Since the Muslim community specially had been under deep obligation and had consistently cooperated with the British, it was expected that it would continue to receive British favours. Their relations were bound to affect India's policies.

So far as India was concerned the British stakes in the country were enormous. Large amounts of British capital were invested in Indian industry, plantations, mining, transport, etc. The British firms exercised a monopoly in shipping, tea, coffee, rubber and jute. They supplied nearly half of the capital invested in cotton and milling industries. The profits from these investments amounted to the vast sum of $ 1,700 million per annum. India had large debts which it owed to England before the Second World War, and it offered immense expanding markets for British manufactured goods.

Besides these economic advantages, a friendly country situated between the Middle Eastern countries where important British interests were at stake and the far distant dominions of Australia and New Zealand, was an asset of great value to the British Commonwealth from the points of view of world politics and global strategy.

The Dominion Status ensured a special position to the British interests and the membership of the Commonwealth strengthened their mutual relations.

By abandoning political dominion over India, which in any case was no longer possible both in view of the internal developments in India and the change in the balance of power in the world, the British gained very solid benefits including the goodwill of both India and Pakistan. Britain owes to Mountbatten an invaluable debt for the services rendered by him as the last proconsul of Britain in India.

VII. Disturbances after June 3 Declaration

Mountbatten had been sent with the definite object of transferring power to India. During the short interval between March 23 and June

15 the basic principles of the constitution of India had been formulated and the modality of the transfer laid down. The principal parties concerned in this change had accepted both the principles and the modality. Mountbatten had personally taken the plan to London and the Prime Minister and the Cabinet expressed their agreement in a matter of minutes. When the Viceroy presented it to the Party leaders, they communicated their assent before the midnight of June 2. The All-India Council of the Muslim League authorized Jinnah on June 9 to take the decision on its behalf and convey it to the Viceroy. The All-India Congress Committee approved the plan on June 15.

The obstructions which had proved insurmountable in the many past attempts were at last overcome. The British Government had been unwilling to demit power except on two conditions—(1) Congress and League consent, and (2) acceptance of Dominion Status. The Plan announced on June 3 fulfilled both these conditions, and removed the British objections.

The Congress had admitted the principle of self-determination of the people of a particular territory. The experience of its leaders in the Interim Government was of such exasperating nature that out of sheer frustration and irritation they concluded that it was impossible to cooperate with the League in the administration of the country. Patel, the Home Minister, became the strongest advocate of separation, and demanded immediate withdrawal of the British. To gain this he was prepared to forego the demand for complete independence and Indian unity and to welcome the establishment of Dominion Status. Nehru was equally indignant and thwarted at the League ministers' tactics, and impatiently longed for the end of the intolerable impasse. The prospect of the riddance of the League impediment at an early date and particularly the chance of the formation of a strong central government after the elimination of the Muslim League's obstreperousness, reconciled the most outspoken advocate of complete independence and the most uncompromising opponent of Dominion Status to the acceptance of that status.

On the other side, Jinnah whose demands grew after every concession, accepted in a gingerly manner the new proposals. But he continued to press the claim for whole provinces and sprang a surprise by demanding further a corridor of one thousand miles connecting Panjab with Bengal. Both these claims were negatived, but he gained at last Pakistan, although truncated and moth-eaten. He had also the satisfaction of seeing the discomfiture of the Congress in regard to both its ideals—unity and independence.

The agreement of all the parties on the basic principle of the plan cleared the way for processing measures to give effect to the plan. Mountbatten, for various reasons—private and public—was anxious to

complete the task assigned to him as expeditiously as possible. He did not want too long a gap between his present appointment and the fulfilment of his ambition to become an Admiral of the Navy. Publicly he took a rather alarmist view of the communal situation in India, and he was not sure how matters would develop in England. He, therefore, decided to anticipate the date of transfer from June 1948 to August 15, 1947.

It is true that appearances in many parts of India looked threatening. There had been sporadic disturbances in many parts of India since the killings in Calcutta. Understandably Panjab and Bengal were the main centres of storm. Neither of the two provinces could be counted upon as an undoubted adherent of Pakistan of the Muslim League conception. This uncertainty accentuated the impatience and intolerance of the League and led it to resort to direct action, which whatever the intentions of Jinnah, who unlike Gandhiji was not a votary of non-violence, degenerated into violence—murder and arson.

Both in the western and the eastern region the flames of fire were rising and falling, but were not extinguished. So when the partition of the country was finally proclaimed on June 3, in spite of the fact that Patel, who commanded the confidence of large sections of the Hindus, and Baldev Singh who represented the Sikh community, had signed the agreement, the Hindus of the Panjab and Bengal and the Sikhs of the Panjab remained dissatisfied.

In the Panjab the Sikhs demanded that the river Chenab should be the boundary between Pakistan and Hindustan, so that the largest number of Sikhs should remain together. In Bengal the Hindu Mahasabha under the leadership of Shyama Prasad Mukherji condemned the scheme of a united Bengal and obtained the verdict of the non-Muslim part of the Legislature for the division of the Province.

These decisions exacerbated the resentment of the Muslims, who had claimed undivided Panjab and Bengal for Pakistan.

In the Panjab angry demonstrations followed by riots had occurred since the formation of Khizr Hayat Khan ministry in early 1946. These led to serious disturbances in March 1947. The Muslim League's direct action was mainly responsible for the holocaust which followed. The Hindus generally and the Sikhs specially were the target of the outrages. In Lahore, Amritsar, Multan and Rawalpindi the Sikhs were victims of the most virulent attacks. The violence spread to the villages and small towns in some of the districts.

In the neighbouring province of the North-West Frontier, the Muslim gangs murdered, and pillaged and burnt the beards of the Sikhs, while the Muslim police looked on and the military stood aloof. It is not surprising that humiliated and outraged the Sikhs nursed ideas of revenge. Efforts were made after June 3 to restore confidence

between the Sikhs and the Muslim League, in order to persuade them to stay in Pakistan and prevent the partition of the Panjab. Some Sikh leaders were inclined to join Pakistan provided Eastern Panjab minus the four Hindu majority districts was recognised as the homeland of the Sikhs and made a quasi-autonomous state with certain reservations, *viz.* the right of secession from Pakistan, limited authority to the Central Pakistan government, etc. These efforts proved futile as 'the Sikhs were lukewarm and the Muslims icy cold.'[36]

In the prevailing conditions disaster was inevitable. The Senior Superintendent of Police, Delhi, predicted, "Once a line of division is drawn in the Panjab all Sikhs to the west of it and all Muslims to the east of it will have their . . . chopped off."[37]

When Azad drew Mountbatten's attention and told him that if the country was divided in such an atmosphere, there would be rivers of blood flowing in different parts of the country and the British would be responsible for the carnage, Mountbatten confidently replied, "At least on this one question I shall give you complete assurance, I shall see to it that there is no bloodshed and riot. I am a soldier, not a civilian. Once partition is accepted in principle, I shall issue orders to see that there are no communal disturbances anywhere in the country. If there should be the slightest agitation, I shall adopt the sternest measures to nip the trouble in the bud. I shall not use even the armed police, I will order the army and the air force to act and I shall use tanks and aeroplanes to suppress anybody who wants to create trouble."[38]

Brave words, but alas quite hollow. One of the kind of boasts in which Mountbatten was wont to indulge, with scant appreciation of realities. When the test came Mountbatten's vaunt was exposed for what it was. He proved wholly incompetent in preventing the vandalism and devastation in the Panjab. He did not seem to realize that the forces responsible for law and order were themselves infected with the virus of communalism. In the Panjab 75 per cent of the police was Muslim, and unrealiable when employed in suppressing the excesses of the men of their faith. The officers were not free from bias and among them those of the Muslim community sympathised with the League while the non-Muslims were under the influence of Hindu and Sikh politicians.

VIII. The Unpreparedness of Government

The conditions in the army were extraordinary, and they greatly diminished its utility. At the top the relations between the Viceroy

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36 Moon, Penderel, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
37 *Ibid.*, p. 88.
38 Azad, A. K., *op. cit.*, p. 190

and the Commander-in-Chief in these critical days were far from cordial. Mosley says :

"But by the time partition was decided upon, Mountbatten and Auchinleck were no longer friends and certainly not collaborators."[39]

Auchinleck was afflicted with two prepossessions. In the first place, he reacted violently against any idea of the division of the army, partly because it would destroy the efficiency of a force which had been built up during the last one hundred years, and partly because he did not trust the Indian officer. He believed what General Sir Arthur Smith told Durga Das, "I do not give your army six months. It will crack up before that. You see the Jawans are like bricks, and the officer provides the mortar that holds them together. The Indian officer will not provide the mortar because his leadership has not been tested and the Jawan has no respect for him."[40]

His second obsession was that the sole function of the British troops was to protect the life and property of the British residing in India, for during the period of transition they were in great and imminent danger. It followed that he felt that he had no responsibility for law and order. Mountbatten tried in vain to disabuse his mind and to assure him that the Indians were not thirsty for the British blood, and in fact were well disposed towards them.

It was also probable that Auchinleck in tune with the thinking of the brass hats was 'surreptitiously' manoeuvring for "some sort of impartially controlled central contingent ... constituted for all India defence."[41] Because for the soldiers of the Indian Army "the formation of this contingent was most to be desired as the nucleus of the reborn service that we held so dear."[42] Visions of a so-called independent India under the military protection of a British force !

Auchinleck's reluctance and Mountbatten's and Jenkin's failure to read correctly the signs of the oncoming disaster resulted in the neglect of any planning to meet the situation. It is amazing that even the warning of General Francis Tuker, GOC Eastern Command, was not heeded by Auchinleck. Tuker told Mosley that he had foreseen as early as 1945 that an independent India would have to be divided, "and therefore the Indian army itself should be sorted out—and an impartial force should be kept, so that when the division of the country came there would be no violent commotion or fighting or massacre on the frontiers between the two countries."[43]

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[39] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, pp. 140-41.
[40] Durga Das, *op cit.*, p. 250.
[41] Tuker, F., *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[43] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 138.

Then in 1946, the GHQ asked Tuker to send them a paper about the strategy to be followed in case of India's partition. The paper was submitted but side-tracked. Tuker ruefully observes, "Imagine, if only they had done something then, the Government and GHQ would have had no less than eighteen months in which to have everything ready—an impartial type of civil service appointed for the border regions, a reclassified army, and it could all have been done surreptitiously, a lot of it on paper only, so as to be ready at the drop of a handkerchief any time when partition was decided upon. But they chose to set the paper aside, and the consequences were incalculable."[44]

Till late in May 1947, no preparations were made, and when on June 2, Tuker placed before Ismay the proposal for the formation of a force consisting of the British and Gurkha battalions to keep the peace, he was ignored.

All the forebodings then of political leaders and military men unhappily proved true. The Panjab was plunged into a shameful tragedy marked by bestialities and horrors on a scale unprecedented in history —organised violence, widespread incendiarism, pitiless plunder, rapine, cruel murder of men, women and children, rape and totally heartless determination to exterminate by death or exile the other community. Whole villages, towns and cities were forcibly emptied of Hindus and Sikhs in the western region and of Muslims in eastern Panjab. The terror-stricken people took to roads, railways and whatever means of transport were available to save life. But the roads, the railways and the stations were infested by bands of murderous hooligans and marauders out to loot and kill. The plight of fleeing refugees was pitiful beyond description. The refugee problem for the newly-born independent states was of colossal dimensions and put all their resources—moral and material—to the hardest test.

That this could have been avoided is shown by the contrasting conditions in the Eastern region, where the army took active part in suppressing rioting and Tuker made his own preparations to deal with any emergency. Gandhiji's activity gave invaluable aid.

If the region escaped the monstrous evils of the Panjab it was not only because the military had taken precautions, but equally if not more so because of "the one man boundary force". Calcutta was in everyone's opinion a powder magazine overflowing with explosive material. In August 1946 it had witnessed unparalleled scenes of brutality and bloodshed. Since then it had remained quiescent, but it was ever ready to burst into flames. Tuker who was in command of the area to keep peace was fortunate in being reinforced by an extraordinary 'Boundary Force' "which was of greater efficiency than the

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

50,000 soldiers, with their guns and armoured cars, who failed so abjectly in the Panjab."[45]

Gandhiji who was the one-man boundary force incarnate, was on his way to Noakhali when the Hindus and Muslims of Calcutta begged him to stay in Calcutta. Suhrawardy joined in this appeal and Gandhiji yielded on the promise of Suhrawardy that he would work with Gandhiji and stay by his side.

Suhrawardy kept his word and Gandhiji remained in Calcutta living in Beliaghata, a Muslim district surrounded by Hindu slums equally noisome—an area of appalling poverty, filth, degradation and crime.

Sardar Patel wrote to him on 13 August, "so you have got yourself detained in Calcutta, and that too in a quarter which is a veritable shambles and a notorious den of gangsters and hooligans. And in what choice company, too."[46]

Gandhiji and Suhrawardy bided together, addressed crowded audiences, held prayer meetings, with the result :

"The amazing, the miraculous thing was that the magic of Gandhi's personality, plus the shrewdness of his tactics, worked; twenty four hours after his arrival, 5000 Muslims and Hindus were going in joint procession through the slums of Beliaghata, crying slogans no one had ever thought to hear any more.

"*Hindu Muslim ek ho!* and *Hindu Muslim bhai bhai!* (Hindus and Muslims unite! Hindus and Muslims are brothers!)

"The killing ceased. Lieutenant General Tuker had his British and Gurkha 'fire squadrons' ready for instant action, but they were not needed. . . . And the magic was spreading. In Bihar and in Noakhali the outbreaks of savagery were dying down."[47]

It is by far the saddest episode of the last days of British rule that with a British Viceroy in supreme command, with British Governors exercising authority over the Provinces under the Act of 1935, with the Panjab under the autocratic rule of a Governor empowered under section 93 of the same Act to administer without let or hindrance and with the army still undivided and still controlled by a British Commander-in-Chief and manned in the higher ranks by British officers, the wielders of power should have been so unnerved as to allow unarmed and undisciplined mobs to completely defy law and order and wreak their evil designs on the largest possible scale. No explanation even of the Penderel Moon type seems adequate. Two psychological factors appear to have been involved—(1) the paralysis of the will to action of many officers of the Government as a result of the

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 219.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 222.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 225.

proximity of British withdrawal; (2) the resentment and heart-ache of Englishmen at what appeared like an abject resolve of His Majesty's Government to scuttle an empire whose history was redolent with the heroic deeds and glorious achievement of generations of their countrymen.

IX. The Measures to Execute the Plan

In these grim conditions the agreement on the proposals of June 3 had to be given effect to. Two kinds of measures were necessary to do this. In the first place it was necessary to provide the legal basis to the new constitution by Parliamentary legislation. Secondly, the administrative consequences of Partition had to be faced.

So far as the first was concerned the Indian Independence Bill, 1947, was rushed through Parliament in the short period of twelve days (4th July to 16th July). It received the Royal Assent on July 18.

The Act fixed the date of August 15, 1947, for setting up the two Dominions. It indicated the territorial division of India into Pakistan and India, and the constitution of the two provinces each in Bengal and Panjab. It provided for each Dominion a separate Governor-General, a legislature with full authority for making laws unhindered by the British Parliament. By the Act the responsibility of His Majesty's Government in India was brought to an end and the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States lapsed on 15th August. The Act also laid down temporary provisions for the government of the Dominions by giving to the two Constituent Assemblies the status of Parliament with the full powers of Dominion Legislature. It authorized the Governor-General to issue temporary orders for making provision as appeared to him to be necessary or expedient in order to bring the Act into effective operation. Lastly it prescribed the conditions and terms of the Secretary of State's Services and the Indian Armed Force, the continuance of the jurisdiction or authority of His Majesty's Government over the British army, navy and air force.

Before the Bill was presented to Parliament it was necessary to decide whether for the period of transition there should be one or two Governors General for the two Dominions. Mountbatten showed a keen desire to be the first Governor General of both the Dominions. When Nehru offered him the post of the Governor General of India, it was assumed that Jinnah would follow the lead. But as usual Jinnah at first remained non-committal. Mountbatten tried to persuade him that it would be in the best interests of Pakistan to accept the suggestion of a common head of the two States, because in the many disputes which would arise a common Governor General would be able to offer

solutions acceptable to both. But Jinnah was not impressed. The final argument of Mountbatten was that in a democratic set-up the Prime Minister was all powerful, while the Governor General or the head of the State as a constitutional chief was bereft of all authority and obliged to act upon the advice of the Prime Minister. Jinnah's reply was significant. He said, "In my position it is I who will give the advice, and others who will act on it."[48] In these few words he had not only spurned a dearly-cherished desire of Mountbatten, he had furnished yet another example of his arrogance and vanity. But the worst aspect of the brief statement was that it reiterated Jinnah's oft-repeated condemnation of democratic methods as unsuited to Indian conditions, but now his shaft was unmistakably pointed at Pakistan politics. Thus, the founder of Pakistan had doomed democracy at the very birth of the Muslim state. Mountbatten was advised to accept the Governor Generalship of India alone.

The problems of administration which partition involved were many. They had to be discussed and decided between the two Dominions. For this purpose a Partition Committee which on June 5 developed into the Partition Council was appointed. Mountbatten was its Chairman and there were two representatives each of the two Dominions on it. In order to facilitate its work a Steering Committee of two was set up; ten expert sub-committees of officials were entrusted with special questions and covered the whole field of administration. Besides an Arbitral Council was brought into existence for giving decisions on matters still in dispute after consideration by the Partition Council.

The machinery having been created the problems were tackled. The first among them was the settlement of the boundaries between the two Dominions. Both sides agreed upon establishing two commissions for western and eastern regions under a common chairman, *viz.*, Cyril Radcliffe. They were asked to give their report before the 15th of August. The Reports were ready by the due date, but they were published a few days later, in order to save embarrassment to both Governments as the recommendation of the Commission did not fully satisfy the claims of either. The Radcliffe Award gave 36 per cent of the area and 35 per cent of the population of Bengal to West Bengal, and 38 per cent of the area and 45 per cent of the population of the Panjab to East Panjab.

The second important question related to the division of the rights, liabilities and property of the Governor-General in Council. The problem of the sharing of the National Debt, the allocation of assets and division of cash balances was very complicated and the two sides

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[48] Hodson, H. V., *op. cit.*, p. 331.
(Quotes Viceroy's Personal Report No. 11, 4 July 1947).

had conflicting views; the matter was, therefore, referred to the Secretary of State whose decision saved the situation.

The question of the reorganisation of the Army to suit the needs of the two states and to satisfy their demand for an army of their own, was one of considerable difficulty. The Indian army had been developed as an organic whole, its functions and objectives were well defined. The exigencies of the Second World War and the strikes in the Royal Indian Navy and the Air Force and a general after-war malaise had shaken the discipline of the forces. But the exploits of the Indian National Army in Burma and the North-Eastern Frontier and the extraordinarily uproarious sympathy which the trial of its officers created worsened the situation. Besides the communal tension and the impending partition of the country added to the difficulties.

But above all the attitude of the high military officials was not such as to lead smoothly to a solution. There were different opinions on reorganisation. Some swore by a single united force for the whole of India, that is, the continuance of the Indian army as it was; others were in favour of three armies—one each for the two Dominions composed mainly of soldiers drawn from the territory of the two Dominions, with a third army consisting of contingents of British troops and Gurkha battalions. But the Governments of the two states rejected both these proposals and demanded just two forces under the complete and undivided control of each Government.

Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief, whose duty it was to perform the surgical operation was reluctant, both because he was distressed to cut up an organisation which had been reared up with much care and attention, also because the task was puzzling and complicated. The regiments were composed of communal battalions in different proportions. Then in spite of appointments and promotions of Indians during the war 'the main cadre of officers—and certainly all the General Staff—were British'.

However reluctant, Auchinleck was not unaware of the problem. The Cabinet Mission which came out to India in March 1946, had raised the question and Tuker had supplied a Paper in which he had pointed out that the Partition of India must necessarily imply reclassification of the Army into communal units. But Auchinleck took no notice. When Ismay told him to prepare a plan he replied that it was impossible, that to split an instrument like the Indian Army would be to ruin it. "The Army can't be broken up", he said.

Ultimately, "Claude (Auchinleck) had to be ordered to do it, and he was very resentful."[49] Even then he hemmed and hawed and reluctantly obeyed the orders.

[49]Mosley, L. *op. cit.*, p. 141.

But Mountbatten clearly realised that the disinclination in the matter of the division of the army would have serious political repercussions, nor would any suggestion to prolong the stay of the British units receive a favourable response from India. His insistence at last overcame the hesitation and Auchinleck, redesignated as Supreme Commander from August 15, worked under the direction of the Joint Defence Council to reclassify the army, and reconstitute the two Dominion forces. The British troops started the withdrawal from India on August 17, 1947, and completed it on February 28, 1948. Meanwhile Auchinleck retired on November 20, 1947, and the Defence Council was wound up on December 31, 1947.

So far as the Civil Services were concerned the decision taken was that those members of the Secretary of State's Services who continued to serve under the new governments or in the Provinces would enjoy their existing scales of pay, leave, pension rights, etc. But a distinction was made between the European and Indian members. The former who would no longer be serving under the ultimate control of the Parliament of their own country and would thus hold their appointments under changed conditions, were considered entitled to compensation, while the latter on the ground that they would remain in the services of their own country would not receive any compensation. The same principles of compensation were applied to European officers and other ranks of the Defence Services and the Indian Medical Services. The result of these rules was that most European officers of the civil side opted for compensation and retired. But in the Defence Services a large number elected to remain in the Indian service.

X. The Problem of Paramountcy

For the first time at the Round Table Conference the question of the role of the Indian States in the future constitution of India was given serious consideration. From the discussions the idea of a federal constitution comprehending both British India and India under Indian rulers emerged, and furnished the basis for the Constitution of 1935. But owing to a variety of causes the federal part of the constitution remained in abeyance.

But the federal idea remained, and when during the Second World War the British War Cabinet resolved to reform the Indian constitution and sent Cripps in March 1942 to discuss the proposals in the Draft Declaration, a federal government of India including the Indian States was envisaged.

The Cabinet Mission on May 16, 1946, promised the devolution of self-government to India on the model of the British Dominions

under a constitution prepared by Indians themselves through an Indian Constituent Assembly. They prescribed the method of forming the Assembly, the number of the members and their allocation to the Provinces and the States. But the statement did not describe the part of the States in the constitution-making Assembly in detail. It suggested the broad features only.

The Cabinet Mission's offer to transfer complete power brought India to the door-step of independence, and heralded a revolution in the affairs of the States.

There were 562 States in India which occupied two-fifths of the area of India and contained twenty-five per cent of the population. The territories of the States were intermingled with those of the British Indian provinces.

The people of the States and of the neighbouring areas belonged to the same races, the same religions, cultures and linguistic groups. Their distribution under two different political systems was merely a matter of chance, a result of the exigencies of the British conquest of India. But some of the States were ancient, for instance, those of Rajputana. A number of States owed their origin to the weakness and decline of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century like Hyderabad and the Maratha States. Others were the creation of the British themselves.

The States differed greatly in area and population. For example the area of Kashmir was 82,000 square miles almost as large as England. In population Hyderabad headed them with 16 million persons, followed by Mysore with 7 millions, Travancore 6 millions, Kashmir and Gwalior 4 millions each. A great many were tiny ones with less than 100,000 inhabitants. The total area of all the States combined amounted to nearly 720,000 square miles and their total population was approximately 93 millions.

The population was unevenly divided, two-thirds or 62 millions resided in only 20 States, the remaining one-third (31 millions) were distributed among 542 States.

In status, authority and honours the States differed widely. The Nizam of Hyderabad claimed the status of an ally of the British Government. But their relations with the British Crown were defined by the term Paramountcy, which implicated a system of rights and duties of both. The duties of the Crown were to protect the ruler of the State and his dynasty from internal disorder and external attack, to conduct the external relations of the State, provide for its defence, and regulate disputed successions, to administer the State during the minority of the ruler, and intervene in cases of gross misrule. These relations were partly based on usage and sufferance or agreement, or partly one and partly the other,

During the nineteenth century as a result of India's economic developments the relations of the States with British India had expanded. In matters like customs, excise, salt, currency, railways, posts and telegraphs, common interests and common enterprises had grown up, tending to multiply contacts between the people of both regions, and to expose the peoples of the States to currents of thought and action arising in British India.

The function of Paramountcy was exercised by the Crown through the agency of the Viceroy in his personal capacity. For the last one hundred years, i.e., since the Indian Revolt of 1857, the States were treated as the pet children of the British Government. Queen Victoria had in her Proclamation of 1858 pledged to "respect the rights, dignity and honour of the native Princes as our own." When the political movement spearheaded by the Congress started, the British began to look for counterpoises. The Muslims and the Indian States willingly placed themselves at Government's disposal, and as the struggle of independence became keener the value of the States increased. The rulers of India who at one time followed the policy of keeping the States isolated from one another, now changed their policy and encouraged the States to cooperate among themselves.

In 1921, under British pressure the Princes formed a Chamber of Princes for deliberating on common aims and policies. Although it was expected that most of the States, if not all, would join the Chamber, this did not materialise. Some of the larger States, e.g. Hyderabad, refused to come in. Many very small States were grouped together and had group representation in the Chamber, and it actually came to speak largely for the middle-sized States.

The rule of a large number of the States was of autocratic character, since all authority vested in the ruler. But some rulers were progressive and were making efforts to improve the economic and social conditions of their people.. In Travancore the percentage of literacy had risen to 47.0 per cent and in Cochin to 35.4 per cent—both much higher than any British Indian province. Some had introduced local self-government or advisory and popular institutions endowed with varying quanta of authority. But none had surrendered its sovereignty to its people. The people of the States were much affected by the movement for responsible government in British India and were gradually setting up organisations like the Praja Mandals (People's Circles) to agitate for democratic institutions.

From 1919 onwards their movement began to spread rapidly. The introduction of Provincial autonomy in 1937 gave a great impetus to the aspirations of the State people. Their leaders looked to the Indian National Congress for encouragement and support. In the earlier

phases, however, the Congress followed Gandhiji's policy, namely, no direct intervention in the struggle between the Prince and the People.

In February 1938 the All-India Congress Committee made an advance upon this policy by resolving that while the Congress as an organisation must refrain from taking an active part in State movements, Congressmen were at liberty to do so in their individual capacities. Thus Nehru defied the ban of the ruler of Faridkot (Panjab) on public meetings and processions. Again he tried to enter Kashmir despite the order forbidding his entry to attend the trial of Sheikh Abdullah for sedition.

Soon this negative policy had to be abandoned under the stress of a more vigorous opposition of the rulers to their subjects and the more dynamic lead of Jawaharlal Nehru. His outspoken denunication of the princely order as a relic of medieval feudalism, an anachronistic system which had no place in the modern conditions of society and Politics, greatly alarmed the rulers. Hence the Princes whose representatives had enthusiastically welcomed the idea of a federal union of India at the Round Table Conference in 1930, soon retraced their steps, and encouraged by the lukewarm attitude of the Government of India undertook such obstructive tactics as to defeat the purpose of the Act of 1935.

But the tide was running fast and even the sleepy Political Department of the Government of India woke up. The officers who wanted to preserve the system which pandered to their love of ostentation, romance and luxury and also combined much power with minimum of labour, were compelled to take note of the changing times. From 1937 the Government began to advise the Princes concerning their duties towards the governed, the desirability of improving their administration, and of moving towards the satisfaction of some popular demands. But the advice was not heeded, because the princes doubted if it was seriously meant.

The Declaration of August 1940 gave them encouragement to remain recalcitrant, for it reaffirmed that the treaties with the States were an obligation of the British Crown which must be fulfilled. In 1942 Cripps indicated that after the new constitution it would be necessary for the Princes to negotiate a revision of Treaty arrangements. But Amery, the Secretary of State, repeated that the treaties remained valid in their integrity.

The States began now to consider an alternative to joining the Indian Federation, either a separate sovereign State for all or an independent status for the larger Sta ›s, a possibility visualized in the Cripps offer. But there were differe s among the Princes and the idea of a separate Union fell through, though the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes asked for an assurance from Cripps. Another

alternative was also suggested, *viz.* the British Paramountcy should continue even after the transfer of power, but this had to be ruled out because the removal of British dominion from India would make the exercise of Paramountcy impossible.

After Cripps's departure the Government had to face the opposite pulls of the Congress and the States, one demanding the incorporation of the States in the Indian Union and their representation in the constitution-making body through the elected representatives of the people; the States, on the other hand, desiring a free choice about accession to the Union or joining the Constituent Assembly and representation by nominated members.

The Government sought to satisfy both, the Congress by pressing the States to modernise their administration and to introduce popular governments, the States by assuring them that the rights of Paramountcy would not be transferred to the successor States. In 1945, some steps were taken by some States in the direction of associating the people with Government.

In March 1946 the Cabinet Mission arrived in India, and on 12th May it presented to the Chamber of Princes "the Memorandum on States' Treaties and Paramountcy." It stated the position of the British Government in relation to the States—that during the intervening period till the installation of the independent States of India and Pakistan, Paramountcy would remain in force and would not be transferred to the new Governments and that the rights would lapse to the Indian States. With regard to the relations of the States with British India it was expected that the States would cooperate with the constitution-making body in framing the new constitution, and that they would find a place in the new Governments.

The Cabinet Mission advised the Princes to improve their administration, to form groups of the smaller States and establish common administrative organs, to introduce popular elements in government, and to settle with British Indian Government arrangements for matters of common concern. They also asked the States to fill the void which lapse of Paramountcy would create, either by joining the Indian Federation or by making special political compacts.

The Mission's statement of May 16, 1946, referred to the lapse of Paramountcy and the formation of a federation. It held that the nature of cooperation with the new States should be determined by negotiations, suggested that the federation should be for three subjects only—defence, foreign affairs and communications—and that the representation of the States in the constitution should be based on one member to one million inhabitants, thus giving 93 members to the States in the Assembly. So far as the method of their selection was concerned it was left to the wishes of the States.

The Chamber of Princes replied on June 19, 1946, and appointed a negotiating Committee to discuss constitutional and other matters with the Government. The difficulty was that the Princes wanted to retain ultimate power in their hands, safeguard the monarchy—their own status and that of their dynasty—while the Congress was opposed to claims of independence outside the Federal Union and wanted the change from princely autocracy to responsible government. The Congress was apprehensive of the attitude of the Muslim League which had only a few States within the boundaries of Pakistan. The League was offering temptations of independent status and non-interference in order to turn the States against the Congress. Fortunately although some States entered into negotiations with Jinnah, ultimately they—except three—repelled the advances and chose willingly or by persuasion to stay with the Indian side.

On January 29, 1947, a conference of the rulers was held to consider the terms on which the Cabinet Mission's plan might be approved. These were:

(1) the final decision about entering the Union would be made through negotiations and would not be imposed by the Union Government;

(2) the Federal Union would exercise only the powers delegated by the States;

(3) the status of a State would be that of a sovereign power, there would be no interference with the State constitution, its territorial integrity, succession and dynastic rights; and

(4) the States would continue to exercise internal autonomy and there would be no interference in its exercise.

The Constituent Assembly which began its sittings on 9th December 1946, soon found it necessary to appoint a States Committee to negotiate with the States and wind up the Political Department of the Government of India.

The States Committee under the chairmanship of Nehru met the Negotiating Committee of the Princes' Chamber for talks on February 8 and 9. The Constitutional Adviser of the Constituent Assembly, B. N. Rau, had drawn up a tentative scheme for the selection of the representatives of the States to the Assembly. According to the scheme the States were divided into three Sections A, B, and C.

Section A consisted of the States which selected their representatives individually. There were twenty such States, with a total population of about 62 million. They were allotted 60 seats. Section B included the group of frontier States—north-western and north-eastern. They were altogether 14 in number and formed four groups; their population was about 3 million but they were allotted 4 seats, in view of their special location.

Section C contained all the remaining States, they were combined together in nine groups, and given 29 seats. Thus the three sections were made responsible for the total of 93 seats in the Assembly.

Regarding the selection of the members, the understanding was that 50 per cent would be nominated by the Princes and 50 per cent elected through different types of electoral bodies.

These tentative decisions were confirmed in the meeting of the States Committee and the Negotiating Committee held on March 1 and 2.

At this stage the simmering dissensions among the Princes took a definite shape. New blocs appeared among them—one led by Bhopal and the other consisting of Patiala, Baroda, Bikaner, etc. The first advocated the view that the States should join the Constituent Assembly only at the last stage, that is, when the constitution of the Union would be under consideration. They also wanted to postpone the decision about entering the federation till the constitution was finally framed.

The second bloc argued that their presence at the earlier stages of the deliberations of the Assembly was necessary, as a number of matters affecting the States' interests would be raised and settled at those stages. They made up their minds not to stay out of the Union. The first Prince to follow this line was the Maharaja of Baroda. He was followed by eight others on April 28. In July, 37 more Princes joined the Assembly, among them such important ones as Mysore and Gwalior.

In opposition to them the Nawab of Bhopal set about to form an independent State in Madhya Pradesh, but without success.

When on June 3, the Viceroy announced the decision of His Majesty's Government to hand over power on August 15, the policy adumbrated by the Cabinet Mission on May 12 was reiterated. Mountbatten made it also clear that the States as such would not be permitted to become members of the British Commonwealth.

This declaration obliged the States to think furiously about the future which had overtaken them with such suddenness. Hyderabad under the influence of a fanatical body, the *Ittihad-al-Muslimin* declared its intention to set up an independent monarchy. Travancore guided by C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer took the same line.

Bhopal resigned the Chancellorship of the Chamber of Princes and continued his contacts with Jinnah, entertaining dreams which were destined to prove deceptive but which gave moments of anxiety to the Congress leaders as well as the Viceroy. Mountbatten regarded Bhopal as his second best Indian friend. He advised him and eventually made him see reason and accede to India.

On finding that dangerous developments were taking place which threatened to Balkanize India, Mountbatten invited one hundred

important Princes to meet him on July 25. He addressed them on the Indian situation and the difficulties against which the leaders had to contend. He advised the Princes to cooperate with the governments and representatives of British India, because of their numerous common interests. He explained that the choice before them was to join one of the two states—India and Pakistan, but the choice could not be based on other considerations than geographical. He asked them to sign the Instruments of Accession which involved the transfer of only three subjects to the Union, without any financial liability, and without fear of any encroachment in other matters, thus guaranteeing their autonomy and sovereignty.

The Conference then appointed a Committee of Princes and Ministers to consider the Instrument of Accession which had been drafted by the Viceroy, as also the Standstill Agreement for the interim period.

Before signing the two documents some Princes tried foolishly to open negotiations with Jinnah in order to obtain what, they hoped, would be better terms which would enable them to stay out of the Indian Union. Among them was Jodhpur who was promised the ownership of a port on the Rann of Cutch, a railway line from Jodhpur to Karachi, together with other temptations. Jaisalmer was persuaded by Jodhpur to join this mad plan.

Travancore had started with the intention of becoming independent and Ramaswamy Aiyar, corresponded with Jinnah, but their plots were foiled. Indore and Dholpur were other Princes who created difficulties, which however were overcome by Mountbatten.

The only States which remained obdurate till August 15 and refused to come in were Junagadh, Kashmir and Hyderabad. But their dealings with the Indian Government are subsequent to the history of the struggle for independence, and are outside the purview of this history.

XI. Partition Accomplished

The legal preliminaries for the relinquishment of authority were completed with the passage of the Independence of India Act by the British Parliament in July; the administrative arrangements consequent upon the partition of India were largely accomplished and the preparations for the future relations of the Indian States and their accession to the Union of India were concluded with the signing of the Standstill Agreement and the Instrument of Accession by all the States, excepting three. Lastly the Indian constitution was on the anvil and in the process of formation.

As the day of independence approached near the three parties looked expectantly forward to the momentous occasion.

Of these parties the Muslim League was the most jubilant, for although it had not secured all the Hindu hostages it desired and had been obliged to agree to the partition of the Panjab and Bengal and the surrender of its claim to the Hindu majority districts in these provinces, it had gained its principal objective of an independent and sovereign Pakistan. Its satisfaction was doubled because it had gained its aim in the teeth of Congress opposition and the hesitation of the British rulers; also because the success was in doubt till the last minute. Jinnah told his A.D.C. on arrival at Karachi, "I never thought it would happen. I never expected to see Pakistan in my life-time."[50] The success was mainly due to the dedication and the single-minded and skilful pertinacity of one man, *viz*. Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He had made up his mind in 1937 that the solution of the communal problem lay in the separation of the Muslims in the majority areas from India, hence he played his cards with consummate ability. He persuaded the Muslims of all parts of India—those who would profit by the establishment of Pakistan, as well as those who were bound to suffer from the consequences of partition—to believe that all of them would gain by an independent Muslim State. This speaks volumes for his powers of deluding men to see in a mirage fountains of real water.

He kept the Congress leaders always guessing. He forced them, almost humiliated them, to approach him to find a solution of India's problem. He took full advantage of their repugnance to deal with the foreign rulers and of their preference for settling matters with their own countrymen. He dangled before the Congress terms for agreement which he had no intention to fulfil, but cleverly managed to put the blame for non-acceptance on them. He never intended to compromise or surrender on his main demand. In the Interim Government when Wavell thrust the Leaguers into the Cabinet, he pulled the strings from behind to annoy, irritate and enrage the Congress ministers until they were so desperate as to accept the separation of Muslim majority regions from India, in order to get rid of his henchmen and attain internal peace.

His attitude towards the Government was ambivalent—a combination of compliance and swagger. He cleverly exploited the British animosity towards the Congress and won the power of veto over all plans of constitutional advance or administrative reform. At the same time he pleased the British politicians by adopting their thesis of Hindu-Muslim incompatibility in sentiment, religion and culture and

[50] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 2, (Jaico Publishing, Bombay).

the infeasibility of their unity. Jinnah's strident assertion of the two-nation theory was very gratifying to British ears, as a confirmation of their own views and a justification of their imperialist policy. In order to use Jinnah, they pampered to his pride, put up with his rudeness, inflated his prestige, and encouraged him to persist in his Congress-baiting, which made him a hero to the unsophisticated Muslim masses, who were ever ready to respond to the call of 'Islam in danger'. He boasted legitimately that Pakistan was his creation. He had achieved his aim without much help from the other Muslim leaders who were his lieutenants and yesmen, and against the opposition of the Muslim leaders of the Muslim majority provinces—Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Khan Sahib (Khan Brothers) of the North-West Frontier Province, Sikandar Hayat Khan and Khizr Hayat Khan of the Panjab, Fazlul Haq and Shahid Suhrawardy of Bengal and the untrustworthy leaders of Sind. But in a peculiarly self-forgetful mood or in a fit of remorse at his rude treatment of the Sikhs or at sudden but transient awareness of the need of assuring the minorities, or perhaps in a moment of unusual clarity and foreboding, he delivered himself of sentiments starkly contradictory of what he had averred in the last ten years and more. In his address to the opening session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on August 11, he stated:

"The creation of the new state gives the citizens of Pakistan an opportunity to demonstrate to the world how a nation containing many elements could live in peace and amity and work for the betterment of all its citizens irrespective of caste or creed. Their object should be 'peace within and peace without'." He assured the minorities that so long as they fulfilled their duties and obligations as loyal citizens of Pakistan they had nothing to fear. "We have no ambitions beyond the desire to live honourably and let others live honourably."[51]

As regards the equal rights of Hindus and Muslims he made the following pronouncement:

"You will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State."[52]

A Muslim leader of Sind remarked, the speech bespoke a "chastened mood", and amounted to an abandonment of those fundamental principles on which Jinnah had based his struggle for Pakistan. In fact, this was not so; the speech was all sound without significance. For while he was regaling his audience with the speech, Jinnah was attempting to encompass the ruin of the "Hindu" State, so that it might not live honourably, was inciting the Muslim rulers in India—

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[51] Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 419.

[52] Sayeed, Khalid Bin, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

Bhopal, Hyderabad and Junagadh, to establish independent States in defiance of the Indian Government. He was at the same time urging the ruler of Kashmir, the majority of whose subjects were Muslims, to accede to Pakistan, on pain of deprivation of the essential commodities of life. He was intriguing with Jodhpur and Jaisalmer whose Princes secretly visited him in Delhi and received from him the most glittering promises—in fact, a *carte blanche*—to fill up at their will in order to wean them away from India. He was encouraging the anti-Congressite Dewan of Travancore, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, to hold out against the Congress control by consenting to exchange trade agents with the State. His friend and adviser the Nawab of Bhopal was persuading the Maharaja of Indore to abstain from signing the Instrument of Accession and to plump for independence.

Jinnah, 'the advocate of communal peace and honourable existence', was doing everything to provoke disorder and violence in "Hindu" India and to tarnish her reputation. Nor did he stop to think if Hindus and Muslims could cease to be Hindus and Muslims in the State of Pakistan, why could they not shed their communal character in the Union State of all-India, and become common citizens of one state.

On the occasion of the Address, the Pakistan Constituent Assembly was exercising a dual role—(1) the making of the constitution, and (2) temporarily functioning as the Central Legislature in exercise of the powers in the central field given to the Federal Legislature by the Act of 1935.

According to the Pakistan Provisional Constitution Order, 1947, the Governor-General was endowed with enormous powers. He was not only authorised to choose and appoint ministers who held office during his pleasure, he could allocate portfolios among ministers. There was no provision that the Governor General was to act on the advice of ministers. He could even bring a ministry under his direct control. He could declare an emergency by proclamation and under it make laws for a province or any of its parts. His powers concerning the provinces, their government and administration, appointment of Governors, dismissal of ministers, legislation and executive matters were ill-defined, but assumed without questioning by the First Governor-General.

Apart from exercising such authority, Jinnah was elected President of the Constituent Assembly. In this capacity although Section 6 (3) of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, required that the assent of the President to a law passed by the Assembly should be given in the name of His Majesty the King of England, Jinnah did not follow the law.

It was the aura which surrounded the founder of Pakistan that inspired his devoted followers to move the Assembly on August 12 to

confer on him formally the title of Qaid-i-Azam (the Supreme Leader). Another step forward was taken when on Friday, August 22, 1947, Jinnah's name was read in *Khutba* (address from the pulpit of a mosque) at the Pakistan Colony mosque, Karachi. In justification the Education Minister of Sind stated:

"It is customary among the Musalmans to recite the name of the Caliph or King if any, of the Muslim country in *Khutbas* after Juma and Id prayers. Since Pakistan is now an independent country, it is but fair that the name of *Qaid-i-Azam,* the Head of a Muslim country, be included in *Khutbas* throughout Pakistan."[53]

Campbell-Johnson describing Jinnah's exalted status said: "He (Jinnah) makes only the most superficial attempt to disguise himself as a constitutional Governor General and one of his first acts after putting his name forward was to apply for powers under the 9th Schedule rather than Part II of the 1935 Act which gave him at once dictatorial powers unknown to any Governor General representing the King. Here indeed is Pakistan's King Emperor, Archbishop of Canterbury, Speaker and Prime Minister concentrated into one formidable *Qaid-i-Azam.*"[54]

An elated Jinnah preening over the recent rebuff he had administered to an over-ambitious and too eager Viceroy, enjoying his unchallenged authority in the new Dominion and gloating over the fulsome adulation of his grateful followers, awaited the commencement of the ceremonial which was to usher in the independent and sovereign Pakistan on its fateful voyage through history.

Jinnah had achieved what he had set out to capture, *viz.,* power. But he was so exclusively absorbed in its pursuit that he gave no thought to the ends of which power is only a means. Thus it was that when he had acquired power, he did not know what to do with it. He had not formulated any scheme for the Pakistan constitution, he had no plans for economic reconstruction or social and cultural development. Even his administrative organisation was dependent on British personnel because the number of Muslims available for higher appointments was insufficient. But the greatest danger to the present state of Pakistan was its lack of sufficient binding force which could bring about the integration of peoples of different regions, races, cultures, traditions and customs into a nation. The only cementing factor on which Jinnah and the Muslim League harped was religion, but religion has played in history more often the part of a centrifugal force rather than that of a consolidating bond.

But on the 14th of August when Mountbatten delivered the message of greetings and godspeed to the new Dominion of Pakistan

[53] *Ibid.,* p. 275.

[54] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.,* p. 156.

from His Majesty the King of England, such reflections were far from the mind of the Pakistani inheritors of British power. For the moment they were dazzled by the unexpected spectacle of the hauling down of the Union Jack and its replacement by the green flag of Pakistan. They were lost in dreams of the revival of days when the Righteous Caliphs held court in the sacred city of Medina. The past and not the future held them in its grip.

Jinnah's success in attracting the allegiance of the Muslim masses was most surprising, when it is remembered that a considerable section of their natural and traditional leaders—the Maulvis—were against him, and that he was handicapped by the fact that the Muslim League was really an organization largely supported by upper class Muslims and educated Muslims of the Aligarh school, who were out of touch with the Muslim masses.

This was demonstrated in a number of ways. For instance, the Muslim League had no definite programme for the community's betterment.

The Muslim masses were either petty cultivators or artisans and craftsmen working in villages and towns. Gandhiji had persuaded the Congress to improve the condition of those classes by organising cotton-spinning and weaving and encouraging the use of *Khadi*. His scheme of basic education had the same object. The Muslim League not only did not undertake any such work, it actually discouraged the Muslims from participating in Gandhiji's schemes.

The League was principally concerned with ameliorating the condition of the upper classes and intellectuals. What it cared for was the employment of the young men of these groups and the enjoyment of a share in political power. How little the Muslim leaders who prated about Islamic equality and democracy, genuinely believed in it is shown by the utterances of some of their most eminent men.

Syed Ahmad Khan is claimed as the founder of Pakistan or at least of the two-nation theory, which constitutes the basis of Pakistan. In a speech at Lucknow early in 1888 denouncing the Indian National Congress for its demand for expanding the Legislative Council he asked:

"Will the members of noble families in our country like it that a person of lower class or lower status, even if he has taken the B.A. or M.A. degree and possesses the necessary ability, should govern them and dispose of their wealth, property and honour? Never. Not one of them would like it. The seat of the Counsellor of the Government is a place of honour, Government cannot give it to anybody except a man of high social status."[55]

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[55] Mujeeb, M., "The Partition of India in Retrospect", in Philips, C. H. and Wainwright, M. D. (eds.), *The Partition of India*, p. 410 (note).

Ashraf Ali Thanavi a highly-respected Maulvi, wrote :

"Shaikhs, Sayyids, Ansaris, Alawis are equals; the Mughals and Pathans are all one race (*Qaum*) and cannot compare with Shaikhs and Sayyids. Weavers, barbers, washermen are not the equals of tailors. There is also a grading on the basis of whether the father or the grandfather was converted to Islam."[56]

When Jawaharlal castigated the League as representing the feudal classes, the leaders of the League felt great resentment, but Prof. Mujeeb points out that so far as the Uttar Pradesh was concerned—and the Province was the main bastion of the Muslim League—the elections under the Act of 1935 amply bear out Nehru's contention. Here is the analysis of the Muslim members returned to the Council in 1937:

Nawabs, Rajas and Zamindars	21
Khan Bahadurs	12
Advocates (mostly from Zamindar families) ..	23
Others	10
Total	66

Mujeeb's reflections on the League are: "If Khaliquzzaman had been made a minister the League in Uttar Pradesh would most probably have dissolved itself. . . . Nehru and Azad together cleared the way for his becoming the valiant knight of an insulted and injured community."[57]

Two factors helped Jinnah in overcoming his handicaps in securing the following of the masses—one, the genuine attraction for an independent Muslim State, that is, Pakistan, constituted of majority Muslim areas—a legitimate aspiration; secondly, false propaganda, for instance, the slogan of 'Islam in danger'. As Mujeeb has pointed out Islam as a religion was never an object of any aggressive hostility in India from the non-Muslims in general and the Hindus in particular. Its enemies were all from within—sectarian contestants, Sunnis versus Shiahs, Wahhabis, Ahmadiyas, etc., theological controversialists like *Ahli Hadith* (who consider the *Hadith* as the only standard authority on Muslim conduct) *Ahli Quran* (who consider the *Quran* as the authority and not *Hadith*, etc.), the *Mutazila*, the *Asharites*, etc. and in recent times the Jamaat-i-Islami; and the modernists who oppose the traditionists and favour the separation of religion and politics.

Like the Nazi propaganda in Germany the League propaganda was

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

(Muhammad Mujeeb, Vice-Chancellor of the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, happens to be a cousin of Khaliquzzaman. They belong to a family of eminent lawyers in Lucknow.)

based on exaggeration, misrepresentation, half truths and lies. These were propagated with all the zeal and all the arts of propaganda, so that the masses came to believe in its truth, and those who ought to have known better swallowed it bell, book and candle, because it served their purpose. If the highly educated Germans could be swayed by the propaganda of Hitler and Goebbels, it is not surprising that the unsophisticated Muslims swallowed the Muslim League's publicity as truth. The Pirpur report was the most brazen example of the propaganda. How it turned the minds of even prominent Muslims might be seen from the article of Abdul Qaiyum Khan of Peshawar, who was an important member of the Indian National Congress and a close associate of Abdul Ghaffar Khan till 1945, when he defected to the Muslim League, and became the Chief Minister of NWFP in 1947.[58]

It is not necessary to examine his charges in detail. They contain such exaggerated and unprovable statements as, "there was not much difference between the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha, . . . the vast majority of those who counted in the hierachy were Mahasabhaites at heart"; "Muslim school boys were obliged to worship Gandhiji's portrait"; "Muslim shops were boycotted, and Muslims were attacked irrespective of sex and age"; "the Hindu masses and the Sikhs were taught to re-read Indian history; and told that Islam had destroyed their caste system and had succeeded in converting many millions of Hindus", etc.

Mixed with these were complaints about singing of *Bande Mataram* because it portrayed India as the motherland to be reverenced and loved like a divinity; saluting the Congress flag which was regarded as the National flag; restrictions upon cow-sacrifice, and insisting upon wearing *Khaddar*.

The accusation that the Congress ministries supported the *Shuddhi* (conversion) or *Sangathan* (organisation) movements was quite false. Equally wrong was the assertion that "a scheme of education was introduced which tried to revive the old Vedic culture of the Hindus."

It is difficult to appreciate the propriety of making the neglect of Urdu as a Muslim grievance. Strictly no language can be described as a Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or Hindu language. Arabic is the mother tongue of many who do not profess Islam, e.g., the Christian citizens of Lebanon, Egypt and other Arab countries. Then Arabic was the language of the Arabs even before the advent of Islam.

Nor is Urdu, as Qaiyum agrees, the language of the Muslims.

[58] Abdul Qaiyum Khan: in *The Partition of India*, edited by Philips, C. H. and Wainwright, M.D., pp. 374-80.

Numerous Hindus, Christians and others speak, read and write Urdu. More Muslims speak Bengali than Urdu. If Urdu did not and does not receive the attention due to it, the complaint ought not to be made out as a Muslim grievance. It was and is a common grievance of Urdu-speaking people, irrespective of their religious affiliations.

Like the Nazi and Fascist propagandas the Muslim League propaganda succeeded. Between Jinnah and Azad the Muslims of India chose Jinnah. Future alone will tell whether their choice was right.

XII. Independence at Last

Far different was the state of affairs in India. Delhi which witnessed the unusual scenes of passing away of British Raj on the Independence Day, was quite unlike Karachi—an isolated far-off city, chiefly a town of a politically inert province—the backward Sind. Delhi had been for decades the centre of storm and stress of India's struggle for independence. Delhi had a most lively interest in the proceedings which wound up the rule against which people had striven with all their might and for which they had made sacrifices and undergone suffering. For India it marked the end of a long murky night, the dawn of a new era.

But while the people drunk with joy, left the lonely seclusion of their homes in order to merge their identity in the swelling throngs of their brethren in the open streets and spaces, to feel the thrill of physical union and the exaltation of minds fused together in patriotic pride, their leaders were in a sobered mood weighed down by the thoughts of unfulfilled aims, by the apprehension of an unbeknown, unpredictable future, and by the heart-rending travail of the uprooted, harried and tormented millions in the present.

Independence had come at last. But it had brought with it the severance of old ties, the cruelly traumatic experience of the dismemberment of a naturally united country, the violent dispersion of a vision which throughout history had served as a beacon. The Congress leaders who had repudiated indignantly the Dominion Status resting on the foundations of full provincial autonomy and a debilitated centre offered by the War Cabinet in 1942, agreed to the Mountbatten Plan of 1947, mainly because it promised the immediate transference of power, and assured the establishment of a powerful central government. They reluctantly paid the price for those advantages by acquiescing in the partition of India and the setting up of two sovereign states in the country, knowing that instead of solving the Hindu-Muslim dissensions, it would internationalize the quarrel and bring to bear upon their affairs all the pulls and pushes of international power politics.

The Congress leaders were yearning for power as Gandhiji ruefully noted. Nehru confessed, "Well, I suppose it was the compulsion of events and the feeling that we could not get out of that deadlock by pursuing the way we had done, it became worse and worse. Further a feeling that even if we get freedom for India with that background it would be a very weak India, that is a federal India with too much power in the federating units. A larger India would have constant troubles, constant disintegrating pulls. And also the fact that we saw no other way of getting our freedom—in the near future, I mean. And so we accepted and said, let us build up a strong India. And if others do not want to be in it, well, how can we and why should we force them to be in it?"[59]

In an interview with Leonard Mosley, Nehru gave him a more personal view of the acceptance of Mountbatten plan. He said: "The truth is that we were tired men, and we were getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again—and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us. We saw the fires burning in the Panjab and heard every day of the killings. The plan for partition offered a way out and we took it"[60]

But the Congress leaders were impatient too, for too long had India endured the ills of foreign rule—both moral and material. They had plans of reconstruction of the social system which had become petrified by centuries of long usage, of rapid industrialisation to pull out Indian economy from the stagnation imposed by imperialist policies, of providing urgent relief from the degrading influence of mass poverty, of educational expansion, of modernising a medieval society so that it might play an honourable part in the affairs of the world. They were eager to lead India along the fair path marked by such adventurers of spirit as Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the man of radical ideas, of soaring imagination, and of intense emotions and Vallabhbhai Patel, the man of action, of practical common sense, of balanced judgement and of administrative flair, were restive for getting on to their job—colossal in its intricacy and range.

They had found after the bitter experience of the coalition interim government, that in the then state of suspicion and hostility it was impossible to expect the realisation of their ideal of a unified India. Unfortunately their hopes prevented them from giving up sooner their deeply-cherished aspirations, although there was no doubt that Jinnah who keenly desired independence had even more keenly set his heart

[59] Breehher, Michael, *Nehru : A political Biography*, p. 377.
[60] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 285.

on Pakistan—a goal so dazzling that it lifted the Muslim community off its feet. In the beginning, the Congress and also many non-Congressmen believed that Pakistan was only a bargaining counter. Jinnah had, however, made sure of it with the British rulers which confirmed him in his resolve. But even the War Cabinet's unambiguous proposal of 1942 dividing India into three sections and providing an anaemic centre did not shake the hope of the Congress leaders of a united India. Nor did the subsequent plans of Wavell and the three Cabinet ministers disabuse them. So the delusion continued till it was finally destroyed in 1947. But the delay proved fatal. It accentuated mutual antipathy and intensified opposition to such a pitch as to lead to a virtual civil war.

At last the historic day of August 15 arrived—the last day of the one hundred and fifty years of British rule in India, the first day of freedom for the three hundred and fifty million Indian people, the day on which men and women were understandably beside themselves with joy, when countless delirious crowds flooded the streets, breaking down all restraints, obstructing the viceregal and ministerial processions, pressing round the Assembly Hall, shouting slogans of victory to India and its leaders, and indulging in a carnival of noisy and riotous revelry.

Exactly at the stroke of the midnight hour Earl Mountbatten of Burma, the last British Governor General and Viceroy of India, entered the Assembly Chamber to address the Legislature and give a message of greeting and goodwill from the King, who ceased from this moment to be the Emperor of India. Then Nehru, the heir of Gandhi, the first Prime Minister of independent India, rose to move the adoption of the pledge of dedication to the new Dominion of India in an atmosphere surcharged with emotion. He spoke the words, solemn and sincere, eloquent and equal to the dignity of the historic occasion. He said:

"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly, or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will wake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

"At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and failures.

"Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of the quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today

a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an offering of opportunity to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future ?

"That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. . . . And so we have to labour and to work and work hard to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world. . . . Peace has been said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.

"To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make an appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell."[61]

The Assembly resolved that the members should take the following pledge:

"At this solemn moment when the people of India through suffering and sacrifice, have secured freedom, I . . . . ., a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, do dedicate myself in all humility to the service of India and her people to the end that this ancient land attain her rightful place in the world and make her full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind."[62]

After the pledge the Assembly by means of another resolution proclaimed the Independence of India and invited Mountbatten to become the first constitutional Governor General appointed by free India. The same night Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Assembly, and Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, called on Mountbatten and formally conveyed to him the invitation of the Assembly.

As the night laden with unforgettable memories and tantalising hopes melted away in the light of the first day of independence, India welcomed it with tumultuous enthusiasm. At 8.30 in the morning the trumpets blew to announce the ushering in of the Governor General robed in scarlet and gold and Lady Mountbatten attired in a dress of a fabric woven with threads of silver and gold. They took their seats on the golden throne under rich red velvet canopies lit with hidden electric lights. The Durbar Hall was covered with luxurious carpets which made it look like a veritable field of the cloth of gold.

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[61] Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru : The First Sixty Years*, Vol. II, p. 336.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 337.

The ceremony began with the swearing -in of the new Governor-General. Then Rajendra Prasad read out the congratulatory messages from all over the world. This was followed by the address of Mountbatten to the Assembly. He related briefly the events leading up to this great day. At the end he observed:

"From today I am your constitutional Governor General and I would ask you to regard me as one of yourselves, devoted wholly to the furtherance of India's interests."[63]

Rajendra Prasad replied to the address of Mountbatten first in Hindi and then in English and ended with these words:

"The period of domination of the British over India ends today, and our relationship with Britain is henceforward going to rest on a basis of equality, of mutual goodwill and mutual profit."[64]

The speeches were followed by the unfurling of the national flag on the Council House and a salvo of thirty-one guns was fired.

The last ceremony of the day was saluting the flag of freedom near the war memorial in the Princes Park. Campbell-Johnson, an eye witness of this ceremonial, describes what he saw in these words:

"The planning for the whole ceremony had been based upon the assumption that a crowd of some thirty thousand people would be there, but unfortunately for the planners the numbers were nearer three hundred thousand. ... We were surrounded by the happiest of human hubbubs. The crowds had taken complete possession of all the chairs, standing on the backs, arms and seats, approximately six Indians to a chair.

"In this maelstrom of rank and race, sex and caste were all lost in one vast unison—the desire of myriad human beings to reach the central dais with its flag-pole. In fact the crowd became like some gigantic ocean remorselessly converging on a tiny island and liable any moment to engulf it. ... On all sides there was laughter and good humour. ... Suddenly the cheering swelled into a roar and from where I stood I could just catch a glimpse of the ADCs in white followed by the fluttering lance pennants of the Governor General's Bodyguard, then the Governor General's carriage and more Bodyguard.

" . . . I could see the Mountbattens standing up, waving to the crowd which was cheering and waving back at them. ...

"Just as the flag was unfurled light rain began to fall and rainbow appeared in the sky, matching the saffron, white and green of the flag. ... I must confess it would have taken a man of iron scepticism to be unimpressed by such an augury at such a moment."[65]

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[63] Hodson, H. V., *op. cit.*, p. 394.

[64] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.*, p. 159.

[65] *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

He admitted, "I doubt whether it will be given to me to live through a more crowded or memorable day than this."[66]

Mountbatten's own description of the event of the day testifies, "the 15th August has certainly turned out to be the most remarkable and inspiring day of my life." He adds, the flag was hoisted "amid scenes of the most fantastic rejoicing, and as the flag broke, a brilliant rainbow appeared in the sky, which was taken by the whole crowd as a good omen. ... No British or Indian whom I have since met has ever remembered crowd scenes ever approaching those that were witnessed yesterday."[67]

But in the midst of this unprecedented spectacle of stir and bustle, exciting demonstration of mass exhilaration and rapture and thrilling display of dignity and grandeur, everyone missed the presence of the one man who more than the others had been responsible for creating the occasion which marked the turning point in the history of India, nay, of the world.

Gandhiji was not in Delhi on the day of Independence. He loved freedom, but he valued truth, compassion, righteousness and non-violence more. For him independence and self-government were not identical with power, but with power under the control of virtue and morality. The independence which India achieved on August 15, 1947, left a void and caused a severe heartache. It had been won by sacrificing the ideal of national unity, by surrendering to communal passion, by succumbing to fear and hate, for the sake of power regardless of its end.

He felt his place was not with the Governor General of India proud at the successful fulfilment of the difficult task which the Government of His Majesty had entrusted to him, nor with the mighty ministers intoxicated with new authority who were moulding the destiny of divided India, nor among the celebrities from India and abroad—the Princes and the foreign dignitaries, who had gathered together in the capital of Delhi—but with the poor, the oppressed, the sick of the soul, "the tattered battalion which fights till it dies", with those for whom the poet bemoaned:

"Theirs be the music, the colour, the glory, the gold; mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould; ....the maimed ....the halt and the blind in the rain and the cold."[68]

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66 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

67 Hodson, H.V., *op. cit.*, pp. 390 and 392.

68 Pyarelal, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

XIII. British Strategy to Thwart Nationalism

The third party to these noted transactions was Britain. In fact, Britain had been the dominant factor which for more than a hundred years had overridden the progressive elements in the Indian society struggling for independence. The latter assumed the assertive role only during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

The dominant power was utilized for promoting the exploitative imperialist interests, both economic and political. In the field of politics the British Government had no qualms in meeting all the challenges to its authority or existence by the use of all its military and civil force. The fact that the challengers were the Nationalists, that the Indian National Congress represented them, that the Congress proved its claim by calling the masses to fight the Government, did not cause any hesitation in the mind of Government to treat them as enemies and to unleash against them all the instruments of persecution.

In 1905 the agitation against the Partition of Bengal, from 1918 to 1922 the first Non-Cooperation and Khilafat campaigns, in 1930 the Salt Satyagraha, in 1932 the individual civil disobedience, in 1942 the Quit India call, were all treated alike. All these demands for self-government were regarded as declarations of war. But in order to deceive the world they were declared not national, but Hindu, and therefore deserving of suppression by all available means.

One of the most effective means was the encouragement of certain elements in Indian society to oppose the challengers, the most expedient being the Muslims.

In 1906 the Muslims were told that they, like the British rulers, were the descendants of the conquerors and sultans of India. The Muslims eagerly lapped up this piece of blatant flattery and seriously based the claim to special privileges on it, as if the ninety per cent of the offspring of converted Hindus—mostly from the lower ranks of society—had inherited their blood from the Turani, Irani, Pathan and Arab soldiers and camp-followers who formed the armies of the invaders from the Muslim countries.

The Muslims—peasants, labourers, weavers, butchers, sweepers, artisans, craftsmen, etc., who constituted the vast majority were exalted as proud possessors of a pure religion which made no difference between high and low and unlike Hinduism, was free from the taint of superstition and vice, ignoring all the facts of history and of Muslim life, pandering to false pride and exaggerating communal differences.

Again the Muslims—whether inhabiting Muslim majority areas in India or scattered about in the rest of India, living in the same streets and quarters of the towns and cities or the rural lanes of the hamlets and villages as neighbours, who spoke the same local languages,

followed the same occupations, participated in the same economy—agricultural and industrial, enjoyed and practised the same music, dance, and other arts and amusements—were led to entertain the delusion that they belonged to a different nation, in spite of the fact that they belonged geographically to one territory, and were the progeny of the same races. The Indian Muslims not only in physical structure, but also in their mental make-up were quite different from the Muslims of other lands, a fact recognised all over the Muslim world. Early in the sixteenth century Babur who belonged to Central Asia and had by conquest become the ruler of the Muslim country of Afghanistan, was struck by the particularly Hindustani character of the Indians—Muslim and Hindu—and the Muslims outside India still call the Indian Muslims "Hindis".

But the British rulers who proudly claimed to be the successors of Babur's dynasty, preferred to keep their eyes and mind closed to the common Hindustani character of the Indian people. What is worse they injected the poisonous prejudice into the sentiments of the Muslims themselves; so much so, that while claiming to be the heirs of the Mughals they failed to remember what the Mughals had striven to achieve, namely, a common culture, an integration from Kashmir to the Daccan of all Indians in a common polity, and differentiation from all Muslim states—the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Iran and the Uzbeg Central Asia—by refusing to recognize the Ottoman Sultan as the Caliph, by safeguarding against the Safavids the western frontiers and by repulsing the advance of the Uzbegs across the Hindu Kush.

A topsyturvy account of the decline of the Mughal Empire in the 18th century was made popular. It was alleged that the Empire was ruined by the upsurge of the Hindus, among whom the principal agents were the Marathas and next to them the Jats and the Sikhs. The compliment tickled the fancy of the vainglorious. The fact was ignored or slurred over that the Mughal Empire was destroyed by the ambitious Muslim chiefs like the Nizam of Hyderabad-Deccan, the Rohilla Nawabs of western Uttar Pradesh, the Nawab Vaziers of eastern Uttar Pradesh—Oudh and Kara—the nawabs of the eastern region—Bihar, Bengal and Orissa—and the Muslim governors of Kabul and Lahore.

The Marathas, Jats and Sikhs obtained their chance of conquest only after the rivalries and internecine strife of the factious, short-sighted, selfish and disloyal Muslim chiefs had weakened the Empire. But the Muslim-Mughal and Hindu-Maratha conflict was trumpeted high and low in order to provide powder and shot to the communal antagonists in their wordy warfare.

All this discussion is not meant to deny the existence of differences of creed and culture, personal laws and traditions, but to indicate that

the differences were exaggerated and the common traits minimised to serve political purposes. For there is no country in the world which is free from the diversities of race, language, religion, customs and class. But these differences may be harmonized or magnified according to the exigencies of state policy.

The treatment of the Jews illustrates the point. England extended to them equality of rights and privileges. They helped in its economic development and in political activity. Rothschild, Disraeli, Reading, Montagu, Herbert Samuel, were all Jews, who played an important part in British history, as patriotic Englishmen.

On the other hand, Nazi Germany made them victims of inhuman and bestial atrocities and lost some of its most brilliant scientists, scholars and industrial leaders.

Similar examples of persecution and toleration lie scattered throughout history.

The British policy was to magnify the differences partly no doubt because it was necessary for the preservation of the Empire, partly also because they came to believe in the impossibility of the Hindus and Muslims developing the consciousness of a common nationality. This belief became a dogma that underlay all thinking about constitutional reforms of all parties—Conservative, Liberal and Labour.

Morley, Montagu and Lloyd George, the Liberals, were as much influenced by it as MacDonald, Olivier, Attlee, Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence, the Labourites, and as Birkenhead, Templewood, Amery, Chamberlain and Churchill, the Conservatives. The difference between the parties did not relate to the communal question, but to the question of transfer of responsibility and self-government. Strange as it might appear, all the parties seemed to agree on the subject of Indian unity, yet all of them followed the course which led to division.

Morley and Montagu condemned separate electorates—the seed of partition—in theory, but introduced them in the Acts of 1909 and 1919. Simon and Attlee criticised them and declared them injurious to nation-building yet recommended them for the Act of 1935. At the Round Table Conference Wedgwood Benn expressed his strong disapproval, but Ramsay MacDonald in his Award not only upheld them for the Muslims but also prescribed them for the Depressed Classes and several other groups and interests. The Act of 1935 entrenched them in the constitution.

Zetland, Amery and Linlithgow put the seal upon the Muslim separatism by granting the veto on constitutional advance and administrative reform to the Muslim League. The War Cabinet under Churchill's lead and with the acquiescence of Attlee and Cripps offered separation of provinces in the new constitution on communal basis. The Cabinet mission of three Labour Ministers seconded the proposal

of the War Cabinet and provided the machinery to give it effect. The process was completed by Mountbatten, the agent of the Labour Government.

In the face of this continuous, persistent British-backed design to accentuate communal separateness and the ceaseless propaganda through government's policies and measures, and by British writers, historians, missionaries and officials, which hammered into the minds of the Hindus and the Muslims that their differences were deep and insoluble and their aspirations of national unity vain and intractable, is it surprising that people so dependent for their livelihood and for the satisfaction of their wants upon their rulers, should have succumbed to it? It is easy to blame them for yielding to such evil suggestions. But considering that throughout the nineteenth century when the Indian mind was opening to modern ideas and the Indians looked up to the British as not only divinely-appointed dispensers of peace and order in their country torn by dissensions, wars and anarchy, but also as their teachers in the arts of government and administration and in modern knowledge and science, it is not difficult to see why the propaganda succeeded so well.

Of course it is necessary for the spread of any ideas that the environment should be favourable for its reception. Nationalism and secularism which are modern principles of social and political order require modern conditions of economic and political life. So far as the conditions were concerned. India made some advance towards their evolution, but its progress was not organic, but only in parts, for the simple reason that "people under foreign rule cannot constitute an organic whole." In addition the policies of the Government were motivated by imperialist colonial interests. The result was, although there was some advance in some directions, there was stagnation in others. The advance showed in matters of defence from foreign aggression and in the maintenance of a colonial economy for which the country required internal freedom from disorder and confusion, a modern system of transport and communications and a well-regulated administrative machinery.

Stagnation affected agriculture principally and industry in large sectors. Backwardness characterized education of the masses and their social welfare.

The total effect of the peculiar circumstances was that although the modern consciousness of nationality germinated and spread, medieval conditions of social life environed and moulded its growth. Therefore, although no community remained unaffected, the fusion of communities into a single nationality remained unrealized. The communities did feel the urge of unity although throughout the 20th century numerous attempts were made to achieve it. Even as late as

1946 when mutual suspicions and jealousies had been stoked into a raging fire, it was not absolutely certain that some form of political or constitutional unity would not be established.

Till that year Jinnah was not sure he would achieve outright division. He was even making discrete enquiries from B. N. Rau, the Constitutional Adviser of the Constituent Assembly, concerning the implications of Federation. His acceptance of the entry of the Muslim League in the Interim Government was significant.

What clinched the matter was Mountbatten's hasty resolve to give up the pursuit of unity which he was enjoined to ensure by Attlee, who had told him, "It is the definite objective of His Majesty's Government to obtain a unitary Government for British India and the Indian States within the British Commonwealth."[69]

According to Mosley, "By the end of his first three weeks in India, the Viceroy may not have decided that a unitary India was impossible, but he had certainly reached the conclusion that the attainment of it would be a long and ticklish job, fraught with danger and uncertainty. And Lord Mountbatten was in India not to risk failure but to achieve success and quickly."[70]

V. P. Menon confirms this. He writes, "In the course of his talks with the party leaders, particularly with Jinnah and his colleagues, he became more and more convinced that there was no prospect of an agreed solution on that basis."[71]

So he asked his 'Dickie Birds'[72]—an all-British consultative committee—to produce a constitution on an alternative plan of partition. The broad principles of the plan were : (1) that the responsibility for partition, if it comes, is to rest fairly upon the Indians themselves; (2) the Provinces, generally speaking, shall have the right to determine their own future; (3) Bengal and the Panjab are to be notionally partitioned for voting purposes; (4) the predominantly Moslem Sylhet district in Assam is to be given the option of joining the Moslem part of Bengal; and (5) general elections to be held in North-West Frontier Province."[73]

By May 2, the plan conceived in precipitate hurry and prepared in secrecy was despatched to England for the approval of His Majesty's Government. Later it had to be scrapped because of Nehru's strong dissent. The second draft was then produced by V.P. Menon, but in conditions of even greater haste, actually in four hours on 16th May.

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69 Prime Minister Attlee's Letter of Instruction to Lord Mountbatten, March 1947, given as Appendix I in Hodson, H. V., *op. cit.*, p. 545.

70 Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 105.

71 Menon, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 358.

72 A pet name for the European staff of Mountbatten.

73 Campbell-Johnson, *A.*, op. cit., p. 62.

The Menon draft made partition the basis of constitution-making but did not leave the provinces the right to determine their future. It took just five minutes to secure the approval of His Majesty's Government. In five minutes India's destiny was stamped, sealed and delivered.

On the 3rd of June, Pakistan—thanks to Mountbatten's persuasive powers which not only overcame the opposition of the Congress, the hesitations of the Muslim League, the fears of the Sikhs, and the misgivings of the Princes, but also the doubts of the Labour and Conservative parties—had become an accepted fact.

XIV. Mountbatten's Strategy Misfires

The most controversial measure of the Viceroy was the decision to advance the date of transfer of power from June 1948 to August 15, 1947. Mountbatten's admirers praised him for "sheer intellectual range and vigour" (Ian Stephens), for accomplishing "a task before which anybody would have quailed, but it was one which seemed verily to tempt the gods" (V. P. Menon), for "the achievement by any reckoning and however qualified, was very great" (Hodson) and for "the speed and decision with which he pursued its (plan's) fulfilment. He made mistakes, pushed the wheel of history at times a little too forcefully, but few men could have done better and most would have done worse." (Michael Edwardes).

On this issue Mountbatten recorded his reasons in his conclusions appended to the Report on the Last Viceroyalty submitted to His Majesty's Government in September 1948. His defence for expediting the transference of power to the Indians was on these lines :

The Government had as early as February 20, 1947, declared its intention to quit, definitely by June 1948. This date was advanced to August 15, 1947, as a result of the Mountbatten plan of May 16, which had been communicated to the Congress and the League leaders, and announced on June 2. The earlier date was adopted in order to cut short the interval between the announcement and its implementation, because of the fear of growing impatience of the leaders and the increasing tension among the communities as the ominous incidents in Bengal, the Panjab and the North-West Frontier Province indicated. Delay might have jeopardised the precarious agreement between the parties achieved after years of wrangling.

Then the earlier date was favoured both by the Congress and the League, and was therefore expected to ensure goodwill among the communities, to soothe ruffled tempers and minimise chances of conflict.

There were other impartial considerations which seemed mandatory. In the first place, the civil administration was visibly deterio-

rating, the officials were openly taking sides and the police was unreliable. The prolongation of the period of waiting would worsen the conditions, and force the extension of Section 93 rule in other provinces.

Secondly, the ultimate sanction of law and order, namely, the army, presented difficulties for use as an instrument of government for the maintenance of peace. In view of the fact plans were afoot for its declassification and that the morale of the Indian troops had been affected because the British officers were on the way out, and the faith of the soldier in the officers of their own communities was not yet settled, they were not to be depended upon.

The British troops were not expected to help in civil commotion and communal riots. In any case the Viceroy considered the use of the army for such purposes neither proper nor efficacious. It was also assumed that the only function of the British troops during the last days of the Raj was to protect the life and property of the British residing in India. The special Boundary Force consisting of more than 50,000 troops proved useless, as the leaders of neither Dominion were satisfied with it and were definitely opposed to the employment of its air arm to suppress violent outbursts.

In order to continue till June 1948, it would be necessary to resume recruitment to the Indian civil services, and to transfer a considerable number of British troops from England. The conditions in England prohibited these measures, and the Indian leaders were averse to them.

Lastly, Mountbatten argued that it was impossible to foresee that a calamity of such gigantic proportions would befall Panjab. He expected more trouble in Bengal where the after-effects of 1946 killings had not died out, rather than in the Panjab. And even if such a forecast could be made, it was not possible to do much to overcome it in the then existing state of affairs—uncertainty in the civil and military departments, and bitter animosity between the communities.

Campbell-Johnson justifying Mountbatten's action in antedating the transfer of power, stated :

"Direct action had been launched by the Muslim League in August 1946; there were riots and reprisals for riots. This set off the spark, and disturbances of great intensity took place in Bengal and Bihar. The trouble spread to Lahore and the North-West Frontier Province. In his first talks with Lord Mountbatten the Muslim League leader, Mr. Jinnah, gave a frank warning that unless an acceptable political solution was reached very quickly he would not guarantee to control the situation from his side. A similar warning was given by Congress leaders."[74]

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[74] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.*, p. 354.

According to Moon the Sikh leaders gave an equally frank warning to Jenkins.

XV. The Carnage in Panjab

These reasons were weighty, but were they decisive?

Mountbatten's conclusions might be considered under three heads. Firstly, whether the partition of India and the establishment of two independent states was necessary; secondly, assuming that it was necessary whether the speed with which the partition was carried out was justified; and thirdly granting the need for speed, was the orgy of violence accompanying it unavoidable?

Starting with the last question first, it is necessary to examine the explanation of Mountbatten and his admirers. Their plea was that although in the division of India some trouble was inevitable, holocaust of such dimensions as actually took place could not be foreseen by anybody. But do facts bear out the plea?

From the middle of August 1946 when Jinnah fixed the 16th of August as the Direct Action Day, tension between the two communities had assumed warlike proportions. The first manifestation was the killings in Calcutta, then East Bengal became involved and about the same time in Bihar massacre, plunder, arson, etc., were let loose upon innocent people, but the worst aspect was that though the outward symptoms of the conflict were temporarily suppressed there was really no amelioration of the hostile feelings. They would erupt on slight provocations and threaten repetition of previous violence.

Johnson seemed to think that the riots in the eastern regions gave the provocation for the riots in the west, which is not correct. For the Panjab disturbances were quite independent of the Bengal incidents, which is shown by what happened in Bengal as distinguished from the Panjab.

Of the communal warfare the main possible theatres were Bengal and the Panjab. Mountbatten in the early days of his Viceroyalty was inclined to believe that Bengal rather than the Panjab was the more likely to be the scene of disturbance as the plans for the relinquishment of British authority became known. The belief proved to be wrong. The Panjab had the misfortune to become the arena of a hideous calamity while Bengal escaped. It is surprising that Mountbatten did not realize the potentiality of the Panjab for the tragedy till the middle of July. Not that there was any lack of signs and warnings, all the premonitions pointed in that direction, but preconceptions warped the judgement.

From the time of the last elections (1945-46), the Province was in

a profoundly agitated mood. The three communities—Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs—were nearly balanced, the Muslims with a population of about 16 millions, had a slight edge over the combined Hindus and Sikhs with 12 millions. But in other ways—wealth and education, services and professions—the latter were more advanced than the former. Naturally the Hindus and Sikhs had been more prominent in the public life of the Panjab and had made a larger contribution to its economic development than the Muslims. They were conscious of their contribution and were proud of it.

Fazli Husain, Sikandar Hayat Khan and Khizr Hayat were alive to the realities forming the basis of political power and were averse to a purely communal solution of the problems of Panjab. They disagreed with Jinnah and for provincial purposes kept him at arm's length. Fazli Husain and Sikander Hayat were successful in resisting Jinnah's attempts to bring the Panjab under the control of the Muslim League, because they were both supported by the British Government. But when Khizr Hayat succeeded Sikandar Hayat in 1943 the situation had changed. Jinnah had gained the favours of the Government on all-India issues, and Khizr could not compete for them against Jinnah.

Then in the elections of December 1945 his party—the Unionists—was routed by the Muslim League which won 79 seats. Above all the Muslim League members had entered the Interim Government. They gave all encouragement to the Leaguers in the Panjab against Khizr Hayat. The support of the Central Government proved decisive.

In these adverse circumstances early in January 1946, Khizr formed his Unionist Government in coalition with the Congress party and the Akalis. This enraged the Muslim League so much that it started a frightful campaign against the Government, which continued till Khizr Hayat was obliged to surrender early in March, and the Panjab passed under the rule of the Governor according to Section 93 of the 1935 Act.

But behind the facade of Section 93 government full preparations were going on for a civil war. In March 1947 sanguinary outbreaks occurred in many parts of north-western Panjab—Rawalpindi, Multan, Lahore and Amritsar were the worst affected districts—and the Sikhs were the worst sufferers. The casualties could not be accurately known but were in thousands. They were accompanied with sadistic cruelty and debauchery which might put the beasts to shame.

Insults were added to injury. The Leaguers heaped taunts upon the Sikhs. Khaliquzzaman wrote with evident glee of the Sikh discomfiture and the officials spoke of the degeneracy of the well-to-do Sikhs. When Hindus approached them for protection they were sarcastically referred to Gandhi.

The March events in the Panjab should have opened the eyes of

the Central Government, for, according to Moon, the casualties amounted to 2,049 killed and 1,103 seriously injured[75]. Migrations too had started, though on a small scale. The Panjab Government (under Section 93) failed to deal with the situation adequately. "The explosion", wrote Moon, "had long been apprehended, but its severity and the failure in several places to deal with it promptly and effectively came as a shock... Nor can it be denied that in a number of places the handling of the trouble was irresolute—in one or two deplorably so."[76] The instance of such a vital centre as Amritsar was the worst."[77]

The consequences were predictable. The Sikhs were furious and were naturally burning to avenge the injuries and the insults. The leadership of the community passed from the moderates like Baldev Singh to the fiery extremists like Tara Singh and Kartar Singh. The British failure to give protection to the Sikhs in Amritsar against the Muslim hooligans in 1947 presented a striking contrast to the British dealings in the same city some thirty years earlier when General Dyer wreaked vengeance on the Jallianwala crowd for the murder of a few English men and women. The Sikhs began to plan revenge.

What was brewing among the Sikhs? Moon answers, "I was convinced that nothing else (a settlement between the communities which was impossible at that stage) could avert the horrors which were threatening the Panjab.... It was easy to predict disaster but what was the exact form it would take? The earliest forecast known to me, which roughly corresponded with the event was made by the Senior Superintendent of Police, Delhi, at the end of March."

The foreboding did not take long to become the truth. In April, May and June the Meos—a Muslim community of agriculturists on the borders of Delhi and Panjab and in the Alwar State—was marked out for revenge. Villages were burnt, houses were plundered, men slaughtered and driven out of their homes. Azad told Mountbatten that the partition of the country in the atmosphere then prevailing would lead to bloodshed on a large scale. Mountbatten gave the amazing assurance and promise : "I shall see to it that there is no bloodshed and riot.. .... I will order the Army and the Air force to act. I shall use tanks and aeroplanes to suppress anybody who wants to create trouble."[78]

They say "the way to hell is paved with good intentions". The good intentions of Mountbatten were completely divorced from reality,

[75] Moon, P., *op. cit.*, p. 79, f.n.; in the note Moon adds that these were underestimates. A later estimate put the casualties at 5,000 killed and 3,000 seriously wounded.

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[78] Azad, A.K., *op. cit.*, p. 190.

for they had not the slightest effect on the virulent and inhuman developments of the times. The promise which he made out of over-confidence and lack of judgement proved utterly futile.

On the other hand, he succumbed to Jinnah's bluff. What Jinnah and the Congress leaders told him, and what the Sikhs were planning was well-known. It was equally well-known that the communally-minded officials of the Panjab with the acquiescence, if not complicity of the British officials, were pushing the Province into the inferno. But no precautions were taken. No Tuker was appointed to deal with the rowdies, no one man or two men—Jinnah and Nehru—commission toured the affected districts. The Boundary Commission was set up only on the 1st of August. The attitude of the West Panjab Governor Francis Mudie was not such as to make for communal harmony as was obvious from the remarks he made to Jinnah on September 5, 1947 :

"I am telling everyone that I don't care how the Sikhs get across the border; the good thing is to get rid of them as soon as possible."[79]

The announcement of June 3 conceding Pakistan threw oil on the burning flames. Though the partition of India was accepted by the All-India Congress Committee on June 14, against the protests of Azad and a number of others, it was not agreed to by the Hindus and Sikhs nor by many Musalmans. As Azad pointed out the Hindus and Sikhs of the Panjab considered it as an occasion for mourning in contrast to the feeling in the Congress Committee.

Many Bengali Hindus and Muslims had striven to maintain the unity of Bengal and were disappointed. Even the Congress leaders most strongly in favour of partition, like Patel and Nehru, were forced to this conclusion not by the merit and reasonableness of the case, but because of frustration and anger. Gandhiji who had at one time vowed that partition could only be effected over his dead body yielded to the importunities of his topmost disciples out of sheer despair and sense of helplessness.

The Congressmen, the Hindus and the Sikhs all felt humiliated by their failure to retain the unity of India. In addition they were greatly offended by the attitude of the Muslim League manifested in their resolution of June 12, "a resolution in phraseology designed to infuriate the Congress."[80]

If the one side was unhappy, the other in spite of its outward jubilation, was dissatisfied. Jinnah was resentful because he could not prevent the partition of the Panjab and Bengal, and because his last minute desperate demand for a corridor of a thousand miles to join the

[79] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 144.
[80] Campbell-Johnson, A., *op. cit.*, p. 116.

western wing with Eastern Bengal was peremptorily rejected. The millions of Muslims residing in Hindu majority provinces began to realize that Jinnah had left them in the lurch, that independence had come, but left millions of them—more than a third of the total Muslim population of India—under the domination of the Hindus.

The Viceroy knew that not only in the country at large, but more so within the Interim Government, a war was raging, and its repercussions were adding fuel to the fire ablaze outside. Yet he hardly realized the significance of what was happening. Again, not because there were no premonitory signals. For instance, on June 14, when Mountbatten was resting in Simla, Campbell-Johnson noted in his diary: "We are in the heart of Sikh country here, and the prevailing atmosphere is one of tension and foreboding. . . . Sikh unrest in the Panjab is growing hourly. . . . Rough weather lies ahead of us; in spite of all that has been already achieved, the outlook is still stormy and unsettled."[81]

What, with the deep resentment of the Hindus, the disillusionment of one section of the Muslims and the disappointment of the other, the consternation of the Sikhs at the prospect of the destruction of their solidarity, the rejection of their demand for a Sikh State, and the loss of their dearly-loved sacred shrines, there was more than enough explosive material to give alarm to the custodians of peace and order.

Moon obtained about the end of June information concerning the coming of tragedy. Moon conveyed the information to the staff of the Viceroy in Delhi "but Cassandra-like I cried 'woe', but not too often or too loudly, since I could suggest no remedy and was convinced that nothing could now prevent catastrophe."[82]

However the signs were so loud as to compel attention. Jinnah had asked the Viceroy on June 23 to adopt ruthless measures in suppressing disorder. Nehru urged upon him to do the same, withdraw the police who were communally-minded and declare martial law. On 10th July Kartar Singh openly warned Jenkins that if the Sikhs were not satisfied with the award of the Boundary Commission they would take violent action.

At last on 15th July Mountbatten having become convinced of the seriousness of the situation in the Panjab called a meeting of his advisers to discuss the matter. Then on 20th July he himself visited Lahore to talk with Jenkins. On return to Delhi realizing the urgency of the Panjab affairs, a meeting of the Partition Council was convened on July 22. It was decided to establish a Panjab Boundary Force

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[82] Moon, P., *op. cit.*, p. 94.

to maintain law and order in the districts on the border between east and west Panjab under the operational command of Major-General Rees and the supreme command of Gen. Auchinleck and the Joint Defence Council.' It came into operation from August 1, with about 55,000 men and officers. The force proved quite inadequate for the affected districts in the Province. Then its transport—wheeled vehicles—was unsuited to movement in the plains during the rains. Its misfortune was that no community trusted the force and it met with its demise before it was one month old. Mosley's verdict is, "if there was confidence misplaced, this was the occasion. Rarely had a military force of such strength worked so hard or fought so bravely to achieve so little."[83]

The Partition Council's other decision was to issue a statement which declared on behalf of both the Congress and the Muslim League, (1) fair and equitable treatment to the minorities and the safeguarding of their legitimate interests, (2) no tolerance of violence in any form, (3) acceptance of the award of the Boundary Commission.

Mountbatten regarded it as a Charter of Liberties for all communities. Unfortunately it turned out to be not even worth the paper on which it was inscribed.

On July 27, information was received by Government of the worsening of conditions in the Panjab, of the increasing defiance of authority. Sikh leader Kartar Singh was arrested on the 27th, but Tara Singh remained free.

On the 4th of August Jenkins wrote to Mountbatten about the Panjab situation. He stated : "We are faced not with an ordinary exhibition of political or communal violence, but with a struggle between the communities for the power which we are shortly to abandon. Normal standards cannot be applied to this communal war of succession, which has subjected all sections of the population to unprecedented strains, has dissolved old loyalties and created new ones."[84]

Rees, the Commander of the ill-fated Boundary Force, reported : "Throughout, the killing was pre-medieval in its ferocity. Neither age nor sex was spared. Mothers with babies in their arms were cut down, speared or shot, and Sikhs cried 'Rawalpindi' as they struck home. Both sides were equally merciless."[85]

On August 5, Jenkins sent an officer of the Criminal Investigation Department to see the Viceroy personally. He heard the report and communicated it to Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan and Patel. The report accused Tara Singh and other Sikhs of conspiracy to destroy canal headworks, wreck trains and assassinate Jinnah. Jinnah and Liaqat

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[83] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[84] Hodson, H. V., *op. cit.*, p. 341.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 345.

urged immediate arrest of the Sikh leaders. Patel, Evan Jenkins Governor of the Panjab, Chandulal Trivedi and Francis Mudie, Governors-designate of the Eastern and Western Panjab, opposed. Mountbatten accepted the advice of the latter.

Could the arrest of the militant Sikh leaders have improved the situation when, according to Jenkins, the visits to the Panjab of Liaqat Ali Khan, Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Patel and Baldev Singh—all Central Government members—had accentuated communal bitterness? Jenkins said, "moreover there is very little doubt that the disturbances have in some degree been organised and paid for by persons or bodies directly or indirectly under the control of the Muslim League, the Congress, or the Akali Party."[86]

Obviously this was no time for half measures, hesitations, or avoidance of ruthlessness. Mosley's condemnation might be prejudiced and exaggerated, but nevertheless it points to the paralysis of will resulting from the conflict of opinions. He writes :

"From this moment on, the history of the transfer of power to India is one of over-confidence, half-thought-out enthusiasms, blunders, stupidities, carelessness and mistake after mistake."[87]

In this context it ought to be remembered that Bengal which was considered worse affected than the Panjab, was saved from the commitment of 'pre-medieval barbarities' by the foresight and resolution of the authorities—in the first place the military force under Tuker.

Secondly, it ought to be noted that even at that last stage solutions had been suggested by Penderel Moon who had not lost his sympathies for the Muslims and in fact enjoyed their confidence and respect, and Major Short, a friend of the Sikhs, which if strongly supported by the Government might have turned the ugly situation.

Can it be that both in England and India the men in authority were not clear and definite in their minds regarding the solution of the Indian problem? They seemed to hover between the idea of some sort of unity of India as a whole in accordance with the proposals of the Cabinet Mission or partition into two sovereign states. It is possible that if they had chosen to enforce the one or the other alternative from the start, and not passed on the onus of choosing to the two parties—the Congress and the League—in order to save themselves from responsibility, things might have taken a different course.

Even after the 15th of August Mountbatten continued to toy with the idea of retaining some sort of a liaison body for the two states. The Defence Council which was attended by the two Prime Ministers periodically, which met alternately at Delhi or in Pakistan and which

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[86] *Ibid.*, p. 341.

[87] Mosley, L., *op. cit.*, p. 210.

was presided over by Mountbatten was sought to be perpetuated, so that even after the complete withdrawal of imperialist rule an organ of a superstate might remain as a symbol of Indian unity and common defence.

A vain hope.

Notwithstanding the fact that the idea of Pakistan was based upon flimsy arguments and largely emotional considerations, that its originator, Jinnah, himself was doubtful about its realisation till the very last day, it was conceded by the British because they did not wish to use force against the Muslims. Its basic concept that the Muslims constituted a nation was false. Jinnah himself repudiated it in his opening address to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on August 11. There was the weakest of bonds between the Muslim peoples living in the western and eastern regions of India and no solidarity even among the Muslims inhabiting the different provinces of the western region.

Many Englishmen regarded Pakistan impracticable. Mountbatten thought it a mad scheme. Many wished to maintain India's unity. All British parties, however, had as a result of the war, come to the conclusion that independence of India could no longer be delayed. But they were in two minds concerning the form and nature of independence—united India without power or divided India with balance of power. In either case, provided Dominion Status was accepted, the British interests were safe.

Mountbatten who arrived in India in March 1947 with instructions from the Cabinet found that the nature of the struggle for independence had changed with the acceptance of independence as the immediate goal by the Government. It was now a conflict between the two parties of India concerning the nature of independence and not a struggle between the Indians and the British. The British were, therefore, in the position of interested mediators who were rather anxious to end their commitments as early as possible. They were eager more for early relief from an irksome involvement in the quarrel of the two aspirants for power, than in effecting an orderly and peaceful transfer of government.

The antedating of the demission of authority by nearly ten months and thereby speeding at breakneck pace the complicated affairs involved in the operation, was bound to affect the soundness of some decisions, neglect of some important matters and the fraying of tempers all round.

The narrative of events in the Panjab given above indicates, that perhaps the violence and disorder could have been avoided if, after the March incidents, the situation had been firmly and purposefully handled. If this view is correct then the main argument for anticipating the date of transfer becomes invalid.

Another consideration for retaining the original date—which is not altogether a case of being wise after the event—was the known fact that Jinnah was struck with mortal illness. He did not survive June 1948 by more than 3 months during which he was practically bed-ridden. The question may be asked whether it would have made a difference if the pace was not quickened and the transfer not hastened and Jinnah's fate awaited? Would it not have given opportunity to the Government to retain the British units of the army longer in India, or to organise a force on the lines suggested by Tuker to maintain peace in the Panjab as had been done in Bengal?

Would not the interval have enabled the Boundary Commission to give longer time to "take into account other factors"—strategic, economic, communal, besides ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims in order to arrive at more balanced and more satisfying results?

But these are the might-have-beens of history, and what happened, however much to be deplored, cannot be reversed. Again it may be an act of supererogation to fix the responsibility for the partition of India on any one person or party, but the description of events and the discussion of policies and measures of the characters concerned in the struggle for independence points towards certain conclusions. Before spelling them out it is necessary to admit that history is not an exact science and the determination of the relationship between efficient cause and sufficient effect is a hazardous undertaking, because the factors involved are not all known and the most important factor—the human agent—is inscrutable.

XVI. Epilogue

History is a process in time which links the present with the past of incalculable extent. It is a process of social change under forces, pressures and stresses known, partially known and unknown. Nonetheless, it is important to analyse the broad features of the stupendous historical phenomenon which led to the liberation of more than 350 million human beings from alien domination, to the remarkable political revolution from government by a foreign race to self-government by the people themselves.

The story begins in the 18th century when in Europe modern integrated, self-conscious societies were rising by overcoming medieval anarchy and stagnation—incoherent and indefinite organisation. In Asia, on the contrary, the loosely-knit imperial conglomerations were giving way to feudal anarchy, tribal and dynastic rivalries and dissipation of energy in internecine conflicts. The forward moving socio-

economic organisms of the West collided with the static culture of the East. The conclusion was foregone.

Among the European countries a confluence of favourable conditions gave Britain leadership. Its social cohesion, economic development, political progress and naval power gained for it superiority over others. European adventurers inspired with a spirit of adventure sailed across the oceans in search of wealth and soon arrived on the coast of India—the land of gold.

In this competitive venture the British left the European rivals behind. They faced the welter in India and taking advantage of the political divisions, easily established their dominion. Then they set to create order out of chaos. The medieval Indian societies were deprived of their feudal elite and the medieval Indian economy was subjected to imperial exploitation. The impact of partial modernisation in some departments—administration, education, communication—and of economic stagnation, mainly in agriculture and partly in industry, created an extraordinary situation.

Like the Europe of the transitional 16th and 17th centuries advancing towards modernism through the stage of religious upheaval—the Reformation—India in the twilight of the nineteenth century applied its energies towards religious revivalism. Like the Reformation Indian revivalism was the precursor of the emergence of a new social consciousness—nationalism.

But unlike Europe where the Reformation involved one religion the Indian revival affected two religions. Its integrating influence, therefore, was divided into two channels, and appeared in the form of the consolidation of two communal consciousnesses. It took Europe nearly a century and a half to advance from the religious influence of the Reformation to secular politics. In this transformation it had the good fortune to receive support from the State—in England from the Tudors, in France from Henry IV and his successors, in Germany from the Hohenzollerns. In India, on the other hand, integration was obstructed by the State, which exploited the communal dualism to strengthen its own foundations.

Says Herman Finer, Professor of Political Science and distinguished author of *Theory and Practice of Modern Government*. "History exhibits no society ever, in which the purposes of acquiring wealth, the degree to which energies are devoted to it, and the method of its production and the principles of its distribution have not been markedly controlled and ruled by political principles, that is by the views of the highest good and by political processes, or government".[88] In India's case it was the government of Britain.

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[88] Williamson, H.F., Buttrick J.A., *Economic Development, Principles and Patterns* Chapter X, Herman Finer, *The Role of Government*, p. 368.

In the nineteenth century the Indian religious revival was accompanied by the rise of nationalism. The old upper aristocratic class was being replaced by the middle class of property-owners and the intelligentsia; but the social and ideological atmosphere which they breathed was a mixture of contradictions—socially the overwhelming numbers of the tradition-ridden masses stood against the few westernised educated intelectuals, idealogically the backward-looking revivalists confronted the disciples of nineteenth century Liberalism.

Thus the revivalist phase was still lingering when political consciousness began to assert itself and soon came into collision with the opposing force of British imperialism. Primarily the clash of economic interests brought this opposition to a head. The consciousness of the poverty of the country, the analysis of its causes and the methods of cure occupied the minds of the Indian thinkers and publicists. In both the fields of agriculture and industry there was a national urge for advance—in technology, expansion and diversification of production, capitalisation, organisation. The nineteenth century British political thought and practice, however, regarded this urge as contradictory to British interests. They, therefore, used their political domination to create economic obstacles in the ways of advance and employed their political power to weaken the driving forces behind the urge. The Hindu community was more advanced in economic matters than the Muslims and was consequently regarded as a greater hindrance to the fulfilment of imperialist aims.

The Indian National Congress which was founded in 1885 as an organ of the nascent political consciousness, became the object of suspicion. In order to destroy its national character it was dubbed in official circles as a Hindu organisation and no effort was spared to delude the Muslim community into the belief that the Congress was harmful to their interests.

The communal consciousness was hardened and the scattered Muslim elements sought to be brought together and united. The constitutional reforms of 1909, 1919 and 1935 accentuated the separatist tendencies. The facts of distribution of Muslim population strengthened them. Consequently the communal consciousness developed into the consciousness of nationality and the concept of political unity into that of federal union.

The ideas of nationality and federalism were impaired by the jealousies aroused by the provincial autonomous governments of 1937-39, and they were shattered during the war, because of British hostility to the Congress for its attitude towards the war and of British partiality for the Muslim League for its support. The War Cabinet's proposals of 1942 advanced the process a step further. Muslim nationality blossomed under Britain's warm sympathy into the idea of

the Muslim nation, whose expression demanded full-fledged independence and sovereignty. These were conceded in substance by the Cabinet Mission and consummated by the Labour Government and its agent the last Viceroy of India.

But while the Muslim League spurred by its masterful dictator was travelling fast from stage to stage towards the chosen goal, it is not at all certain whether the Muslim community fully realized the implications of the proposed objective and supported its realization. Did the end the Muslim League chose represent the good of India as a whole, or even of the entire Muslim community of India, or even of the Muslims in their majority areas in India? Events since August 15, 1947, have conclusively demonstrated that partition has failed to secure the general good of India, or of the Muslims of India as a whole; with regard to the last, it is difficult to pronounce a definite opinion now. History will give its verdict in due course.

At every stage from 1906 onwards Muslim particularism was questioned by the Muslim nationalists and suspected by large numbers of Muslims throughout India. During the last ten years of British rule it was propagated assiduously by the Muslim League by means fair and foul. But in 1942 the Panjab refused to tow the line, the North-West Frontier and Sind repudiated the League, Bengal was uncertain. In 1946 when the Cabinet Mission offered Pakistan on a platter the Chief Minister of the Panjab rejected it point-blank; the North-West Frontier Province refused to look at it, Bengal was still in doubt. Even after the elections of December 1946, the Panjab kept the powerful League at an arm's length, so did the North-West Frontier Province, and Bengal toyed with the idea of a united Province.

From 1942 onwards the Panjab was under pressure both of the officials and the League but remained firm. It yielded in 1947 because the Muslim League section of the Interim Government of India made it impossible for the Chief Minister to function independently. The North-West Frontier Province became a victim to similar adverse circumstances because Mountbatten and the local officials succumbed to League intransigence. In the elections of December 1946 the Congress Party in the Frontier Province had won the elections to the Legislative Assembly in spite of the opposition of the Muslim League, yet a ministry heading a majority was eased out in order to hold a plebiscite at the bidding of the League which seemed to be momentarily popular. Bengal's plea for unity was not heeded.

The success of the Muslim League then was more due to the British rulers' favouritism—persistent encouragement and support—than to their own efforts.

This raises the question whether the League or its leader really wanted Pakistan. Many have doubted it and suggested that almost up

to the end Jinnah was himself unsure and in any case was for a long time using the demand as a bargaining point. It ceased to be so used after June 3, 1947, when Government gave its ultimate and final decision in its favour.

Colour is lent to this view by the history of the attempts made from 1916 to 1946 to bring about a settlement of the communal problem. For no earlier failure was decisive and after each failure, both sides felt the necessity of coming together again to iron out the differences. Why success did not attend their attempts has been discussed already and need not be repeated. It is, however, apparent that the desire for unity was throughout pressing, though it was not strong enough to overcome the opposite tendency.

In the tripartite essay the most powerful party consistently exerted its full force in one direction; in consequence the other two parties failed to combine and neutralize that force.

The failure of the Indian National Congress consisted in taking Indian nationalism for granted as the natural attitude of all individuals and communities of India. When Syed Ahmad Khan demurred, the Congress attached no importance to his views. It did not pay any serious attention to the existence of the minority problem. Those who talked about it were dismissed either as British stooges, disappointed or disgruntled individuals, or dismissed as narrow communalists who were excited over trivial matters like cow-killing, music before mosque, Urdu language, but who showed little concern for such vital problems as poverty, illiteracy, political liberty, etc.

The Morley-Minto reforms gave them a shock as a result of which an earnest attempt was made in 1916 at Lucknow for removing the grievances of the minority. But little more was done when during the next 12 years the Muslim League was in a dormant condition and the Muslim community was divided into factions.

The Motilal Nehru Committee, which was appointed by the All-Parties Conference to answer the challenge of the Secretary of State and draft a constitution for India, prepared a report which was considered in Calcutta in the last week of December 1928. Jinnah raised some objections and proposed amendments. But his was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. His mortification marked the beginning of a revolt.

Unfortunately the Congress leaders did not seem to worry. Jinnah had no following and could be bypassed. It did not matter to them that he did represent the inchoate aspirations and grievances of the minority, however disorganised and fractionalized. Then he remained in the shadow till 1936 when elections under the Act of 1935 brought him into prominence. His first instinct was to fight the elections in alliance with the Congress. This did not happen because the Congress

leaders again misjudged him, undervalued him and spurned the League advances. This touched the innermost cord of his personality—vanity—and a one time constitutionalist armchair lawyer turned into a fire-eating, rabble-rousing Fuhrer.

The violence of his emotions led him to raise the slogan of Pakistan. The Congress became alarmed. Now the Congress began to treat him over-considerately, frightened by the alliance which he struck with the rulers. In his turn he began to behave superciliously. His gaze was now fixed on a new vision, but he was not sure whether he would be able to attain it. He, therefore, utilized the opportunity of meeting Gandhiji in September 1944 to obtain his support. Gandhiji went a long way to appease him, but shrunk from taking the last step of accepting his theory of two nations.

Another opportunity of compromise was lost when the proposals of the Cabinet Mission were laid before the two parties. Both accepted with some reservations the scheme of the constitution-making assembly. But the Congress chose to treat the Assembly as a sovereign body whose decisions could not be altered or modified by any external authority. Jinnah repudiated this interpretation and his view was upheld by the British Cabinet. The result was that the Muslim League refused to come into the Assembly and the chances of framing a constitution with mutual cooperation were lost.

It was the minority problem round which the politics of the Government, the Congress and the Muslim League revolved. The Congress leaders suffered from a great handicap in dealing with it. Their mental horizon was limited by the political thought of England. Their experience was confined to the example of British political and constitutional activity. British thought and practice were wholly ignorant of the minority problem. Hence the Indian students of British philosophy and politics were lacking in apperception of the communal problem. They had little understanding and less sympathy for the fears and apprehensions of the minority community.

On the other hand, the Muslim minority exaggerated its fears and apprehensions to ridiculous lengths. They represented the Hindus as tyrannical monsters bent upon the destruction of culture, religion and language of the Muslims and the reduction of the community to slavery. They took the chauvinistic declarations of the small extremist section of the Hindus as the correct expression of the Hindu mind, utterly ignoring the fact that the extremists' influence over the Hindu community was so exiguous that they were unable to challenge the Congress successfully in any Provincial or Central elections during the twentieth century. Nevertheless the Muslims came to believe that not only their cultural and religious ways were different from those of the Hindus, their political interests also were distinct. They were

encouraged in their thinking by the writings and speeches of the members of the ruling party and by the divisive policies of the Government.

So far as the British ruling class was concerned, its conduct was naturally determined by the principle of self-preservation. Placed in the midst of the millions of India the empire could be preserved only by dividing the vast numbers into competing groups and by balancing the groups against one another. This policy needed justification which was provided by two convictions, (1) that the communities in India constituted irreconcilable social units which could never become a nation; and (2) in such an aggregation of societies and communities divided by race, language, religion, caste and custom it was impossible to discover a central representative core which could be identified as the self of the nation and to which the responsibility for the whole of the people could be transferred.

In the second place the British sense of self-esteem and rectitude was supported by what they believed as the successful achievement of the British Raj—peace and order over a sub-continent in which 350 million human beings dwelt, a system of modern administration—law and justice, a network of communications—railways, roads, post and telegraph—the organisation of a powerful army of defence, arrangements for social welfare—education, sanitation, and above all the arousing of the spirit of modernism—nationalism, secularism and science.

All that was needed for a healthy cattle-farm—wholesome food and drink, clean sheds and drainage, well-laid paths, security from the enemies—poisonous insects and beasts of prey—all with a purpose—fat abundant milk, rich meat and plenty—all was there, or at least much of it, but what differentiates the cattle-farm from the human habitat—the consciousness of self-direction—was absent.

But at last the dykes that imperialist engineering had built to keep the seas of freedom out were demolished by an immense tidal wave thrown up by many little-known tremendous forces rising out of the cavernous depths of the sea of humanity which engulfed the world and obliterated the familiar landmarks.

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